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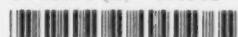
Item 2 of the provisional agenda

Adoption of the agenda and organization of work

Annotated provisional agenda

Provisional agenda

1. Election of officers.
2. Adoption of the agenda and organization of work.
3. Programme questions:
 - (a) Programme performance of the United Nations for the biennium 2004-2005;
 - (b) Proposed strategic framework for the biennium 2008-2009;
 - (c) Revised estimates relating to the 2005 World Summit Outcome;
 - (d) Evaluation.
4. Coordination questions:
 - (a) Report of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination;
 - (b) New Partnership for Africa's Development.
5. Report(s) of the Joint Inspection Unit.
6. Improving the working methods and procedures of the Committee for Programme and Coordination within the framework of its mandate.
7. Provisional agenda for the forty-seventh session.
8. Adoption of the report of the Committee on its forty-sixth session.



Annotations

1. Election of officers

At its twenty-fifth session, the Committee for Programme and Coordination reaffirmed the decision made at its twenty-fourth session that the post of its Chairman, as well as the other posts on the Bureau, should rotate annually among the regional groups in the following pattern of rotation: (a) Group of African States; (b) Group of Eastern European States; (c) Group of Latin American and Caribbean States; (d) Group of Western European and Other States; and (e) Group of Asian States.

At its forty-sixth session, the Committee may wish to elect the Chairman from the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States in accordance with the agreed pattern of rotation for the post of Chairman, and the Rapporteur from the regional group that occupied the post of Chairman the previous year, namely, the Group of Eastern European States.

2. Adoption of the agenda and organization of work

Pursuant to paragraph 2 (e) of Economic and Social Council resolution 1979/41 and paragraph 2 of General Assembly resolution 34/50, the Committee submitted to the Council and the Assembly for their review the provisional agenda for its forty-sixth session, together with the list of documentation requested.

In accordance with paragraph 6 of the annex to Economic and Social Council resolution 2008 (LX) and General Assembly resolution 59/267, the reports of the Joint Inspection Unit concerning the economic, social and human rights programmes of the United Nations system, including the reports dealing with the United Nations Development Programme, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the United Nations Institute for Training and Research, shall be examined by the Committee, which shall report thereon to the Council and the Assembly. The Assembly invited the Committee, in performing its programmatic, coordination, monitoring and evaluation functions, as contained in its mandate, to consider relevant reports of the Unit.

In that connection, the Committee will select, at its organizational meeting, under agenda item 2, the report(s) of the Joint Inspection Unit that it will consider at its forty-sixth session under agenda item 5.

Pursuant to General Assembly resolutions 53/207 and 54/236 and decision 54/474, attention is drawn to Secretary-General's bulletin ST/SGB/2000/8, containing the approved Regulations and Rules Governing Programme Planning, the Programme Aspects of the Budget, the Monitoring of Implementation and the Methods of Evaluation.

Documentation

Note by the Secretariat on the status of preparedness of documentation for the session (E/AC.51/2006/L.1)

Note by the Secretariat on the reports of the Joint Inspection Unit (E/AC.51/2006/L.2)

3. Programme questions

(a) Programme performance of the United Nations for the biennium 2004-2005

Regulation 6.1 of the Regulations and Rules Governing Programme Planning, the Programme Aspects of the Budget, the Monitoring of Implementation and the Methods of Evaluation provides that:

The Secretary-General shall monitor accomplishments through the delivery of outputs scheduled in the approved programme budget through a central unit in the Secretariat. After the completion of the biennial budget period, the Secretary-General shall report to the General Assembly, through the Committee for Programme and Coordination, on programme performance during that period.

In paragraphs 19 and 30 of its resolution 58/269, entitled "Strengthening of the United Nations: an agenda for further change", the General Assembly emphasized the need to strengthen the monitoring and evaluation system and, in that regard urged the Secretary-General to improve the format and timing of programme performance and evaluation reports. It requested the Secretary-General to ensure that resources were clearly identified in all the sections of the proposed programme budget for the performance of the monitoring and evaluation functions.

In its resolution 59/275, the General Assembly, in endorsing the conclusions and recommendations of the Committee, decided that the relevant programme of the proposed strategic framework would be considered in conjunction with the corresponding section of the programme performance report. Since the programme performance report reflects a period of two bienniums prior to that covered by the proposed strategic framework, the Assembly also decided that the Secretariat would formally present updated information on the relevant parts of the programme performance report on the understanding that such updated information would also be considered. The Assembly requested the Secretary-General to ensure that future programme performance reports would provide more detailed information on the reasons for less than full implementation of programmed outputs, or the postponement and termination thereof.

Documentation

Report of the Secretary-General on the programme performance of the United Nations for the biennium 2004-2005 (A/61/64)

(b) Proposed strategic framework for the biennium 2008-2009

In its resolution 58/269, the General Assembly affirmed that the strategic framework would constitute the principal policy directive of the United Nations and serve as the basis for programme planning, budgeting, monitoring and evaluation.

In paragraph 5 of its resolution 59/275, the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to prepare and propose a plan outline, reflecting the longer-term objectives of the Organization, and a biennial programme plan in the context of the strategic framework for the biennium 2008-2009, based, inter alia, on the following principal criteria:

- (a) The longer-term objectives consistent with all the relevant legislative mandates in all areas of the activities of the United Nations;
- (b) Outcomes of the intergovernmental conferences and summits;
- (c) Inputs from relevant programme managers;
- (d) Use of intergovernmentally agreed terms and expressions.

In paragraph 3 of its resolution 60/246, the General Assembly endorsed the recommendation of the Committee, set out in paragraph 111 of its report,¹ that the Secretary-General be requested to submit proposals to the General Assembly, in the context of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2008-2009, on expanding the results-based logical framework to the executive direction and management components in the remaining sections of the programme budget, where relevant, with a view to enhancing managerial responsibility for programme implementation.

Documentation

Report of the Secretary-General on the proposed strategic framework for the biennium 2008-2009; part A, plan outline, and part B, biennial programme plan (A/61/6, prog. 1-27)

(c) Revised estimates relating to the 2005 World Summit Outcome

In paragraphs 3 and 4 of its resolution 60/246, the General Assembly endorsed the conclusions and recommendations of the Committee as contained in paragraphs 61, 67 and 106 to 122 of its report¹ and noted that consideration of the programme narratives contained in the revised estimates would follow consideration thereof by the Committee no later than September 2006.

Documentation

Programme narratives of the revised estimates relating to the 2005 World Summit Outcome as contained in A/60/537

(d) Evaluation

Strengthening the role of evaluation findings in programme design, delivery and policy directives

In accordance with regulation 7.4 of the Regulations and Rules Governing Programme Planning, the Programme Aspects of the Budget, the Monitoring of Implementation and the Methods of Evaluation, the Committee will consider the report of the Secretary-General on the strengthening of the evaluation role and the application of evaluation findings in programme design, delivery and policy directives. In this regard, the attention of the Committee is drawn to the relevant sections of General Assembly resolutions 36/228 B, 37/234, 38/227 A and B, 42/215, 43/219, 44/194, 45/253, 55/234, 57/282 and 59/275.

¹ Official Records of the General Assembly, Sixtieth Session, Supplement No. 16 and corrigendum (A/60/16 and Corr.1).

In paragraph 9 of its resolution 60/257, the General Assembly encouraged intergovernmental bodies to make use of the findings of the programme performance report of the Secretary-General and evaluation reports for planning and policymaking.

Documentation

Report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services on strengthening the role of evaluation and the application of evaluation findings on programme design, delivery and policy directives

Thematic evaluation

In paragraph 2 of its resolution 60/257, the General Assembly endorsed the recommendation made by the Committee in paragraph 186 of its report¹ that the next thematic evaluation by the Office of Internal Oversight Services be on the subject "Knowledge management networks in the pursuit of the goals of the Millennium Declaration".

In its resolution 58/268, the General Assembly endorsed the recommendation of the Committee that the usefulness of the pilot thematic evaluation be reviewed by the Committee at its forty-sixth session.

Documentation

Report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services on the thematic evaluation of knowledge management networks in the pursuit of the goals of the Millennium Declaration (E/AC.51/2006/2)

Report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services on the usefulness of the pilot thematic evaluation (E/AC.51/2006/3)

In-depth evaluation

By its resolution 57/282, the General Assembly decided that the Office of Internal Oversight Services should undertake an in-depth evaluation of political affairs, to be submitted to the Committee at its forty-sixth session.

Documentation

Report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services on an in-depth evaluation of political affairs (E/AC.51/2006/4)

Triennial review

In accordance with General Assembly resolution 58/268, the Committee, at its forty-sixth session, will undertake a triennial review of the implementation of recommendations made by the Committee at its forty-third session on the in-depth evaluation of the programme on the law of the sea and ocean affairs.

Documentation

Report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services on the triennial review of the implementation of recommendations made by the Committee for Programme and

Coordination at its forty-third session on the in-depth evaluation of the programme on the law of the sea and ocean affairs (E/AC.51/2006/5)

4. Coordination questions

(a) Report of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination

In accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 2008 (LX), the Committee will have before it the annual overview report of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB) for 2005/06.

In paragraph 2 of its resolution 60/257, the Assembly endorsed the conclusions and recommendations contained in the report of the Committee on the work of its forty-fifth session¹ regarding the annual overview report of CEB for 2004/05.

In paragraph 202 of its report, the Committee requested CEB to ensure that support for the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) remained a priority of the United Nations system. It encouraged CEB member organizations to further align their priorities with those of NEPAD and to scale up their efforts in support of it. The Committee requested CEB to provide an update on its further efforts to ensure effective and coordinated system-wide support for NEPAD in its next annual overview report.

In paragraph 203 of its report, the Committee underscored the importance of effective coordination of system-wide efforts against hunger. It took note of the information on existing inter-agency mechanisms to coordinate the fight against hunger and poverty and recommended that CEB include in its next annual overview report information on the obstacles, problems and needs encountered by the inter-agency mechanisms. The Committee also invited CEB to continue to monitor the effective coordination of system-wide efforts against hunger and poverty.

In paragraph 205 of its report, the Committee recommended that the transfer of assets of illicit origin and the return of such assets to the countries of origin, as endorsed by the General Assembly in its resolution 59/242, be added to the list of specific areas identified for joint work in the report.

In paragraph 208 of its report, the Committee recalled its terms of reference and its role as the main subsidiary body of the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council for planning, programming and coordination and further recognized that it should reflect on its reporting on the CEB annual overview report to ensure that it provides inputs and recommendations that strengthen the coordination role of the Council. The Committee also invited the Assembly and the Council to give due consideration to its recommendations on coordination.

In paragraph 209 of its report, the Committee recognized that in its future consideration of CEB reports, it should give more attention to the programmatic aspects of the report. The Committee thus invited CEB to expand its reporting on those aspects.

In paragraph 210 of its report, the Committee recommended that the General Assembly request the Secretary-General to ensure that CEB, in developing common approaches to address the changing relationship between regular and voluntary funding in the various participating organizations of CEB, continues to focus, inter alia, on measures to ensure that programme delivery corresponds to legislative

mandates and that the impact of the changing relationship between regular and voluntary funding on management and programmes is brought to the attention of the relevant legislative bodies.

Documentation

Annual overview report of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination for 2005/06

(b) New Partnership for Africa's Development

In its resolution 60/257, the Assembly endorsed the recommendations of the Committee on the New Partnership for Africa's Development.

In paragraph 231 of its report,¹ the Committee called upon the various components of the United Nations system to make greater efforts to work together to provide focused and coordinated support to NEPAD. In that regard, the Committee recalled General Assembly resolution 59/254, in which the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to continue to take measures to strengthen the Office of the Special Adviser on Africa in order to enable it to effectively fulfil its mandate and to coordinate resource and capacity mobilization, institutional support and advocacy to enhance a coordinated and integrated response to the challenges facing Africa. In paragraph 232, the Committee recommended that the Economic Commission for Africa and United Nations country offices be utilized more actively for the advocacy of NEPAD programmes to ensure broader understanding of and participation in the programmes by those who would benefit from them.

In paragraph 237 of its report, the Committee recommended that the General Assembly request the Secretary-General to report to the Committee at its forty-sixth session, and annually thereafter, on the progress, including problems, obstacles and challenges, as well as the goals of the United Nations system to be achieved in support of the New Partnership for Africa's Development.

Documentation

Report of the Secretary-General on United Nations system support for the New Partnership for Africa's Development (E/AC.51/2006/6)

5. Report(s) of the Joint Inspection Unit

Under agenda item 5, the Committee will consider the report(s) of the Joint Inspection Unit selected by the Committee during its organizational meeting, on 17 May 2006.

In its resolution 59/267, the General Assembly reaffirmed paragraph 2 of article 11 of the statute of the Unit and requested that the Unit, as a whole, also take responsibility in the exercise of its collective wisdom with regard to all its reports, notes and recommendations, in order to improve the effectiveness of the Unit. The Assembly decided that the Unit should perform its functions and responsibilities strictly in accordance with the provisions of its statute. The Assembly also decided that the programme of work of the Unit should be collectively approved, providing the rationale for choice as well as the relevance of the envisaged outcome to

improving management and methods and promoting greater coordination between organizations.

The General Assembly decided further that the Unit should mainly focus on identifying means to improve management and to ensure that optimum use was made of available resources, as stipulated in paragraphs 1 to 3 of article 5 of the statute, and that to this end the Unit would set out management criteria and methods for assessment of management performance and effectiveness relevant to participating organizations. The Assembly stipulated that the Unit should include in its annual reports information on implementation and the results achieved by organizations in respect of their follow-up to the recommendations of the Unit as endorsed by their legislative bodies, and the arrangements put in place by participating organizations for reporting thereon. The Assembly decided that, as part of its focus on management issues, the Unit should also assess in its relevant reports the development and application of the principle of accountability in participating organizations.

In its resolution 60/257, the General Assembly endorsed the recommendations of the Committee contained in paragraph 248 of its report.¹ The Assembly endorsed the benchmarking framework proposed by the Unit as a tool for the Secretary-General, for the oversight bodies and for itself to measure the progress towards an effective implementation of results-based management in the United Nations.² The Assembly made a number of requests to the Secretary-General, as Chairman of CEB, relating to the harmonization and endorsement of the benchmarking framework and with regard to accountability and performance management and training.

Documentation

Report(s) of the Joint Inspection Unit (see E/AC.51/2006/L.2)

6. Improving the working methods and procedures of the Committee for Programme and Coordination within the framework of its mandate

The Committee has been considering the item entitled "Improving the working methods and procedures of the Committee for Programme and Coordination within the framework of its mandate" annually since its thirty-eighth session. At its forty-fifth session, the Committee held nine rounds of informal consultations and a number of "informal informal" consultations to consider proposals that had been forwarded during informal consultations.

It will be recalled that in its resolution 57/282 the General Assembly requested the Committee to continue to observe its methods of governing the drafting and format of its reports and encouraged the Committee to continue its discussions on improving its working methods and procedures within the framework of its mandate, with a view to further enhancing its effectiveness and continued relevance.

In paragraph 33 of its resolution 57/300, entitled "Strengthening of the United Nations: an agenda for further change", the General Assembly reaffirmed the roles

² See A/59/607, A/59/617 and Add.1, A/59/631 and A/59/632.

of the Fifth Committee, the Committee for Programme and Coordination and the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions in the intergovernmental consideration of the planning, programming and budgeting process. It also invited the Committee for Programme and Coordination to continue to improve its working methods.

In its resolution 59/275, the Assembly recalled paragraph 18 of its resolution 58/269, in which it had invited the Committee to submit, at its forty-fourth session, recommendations on improving its working methods. The Assembly requested the Secretary-General to schedule the organizational session of the forty-fifth session of the Committee as soon as possible at the resumed session of the Fifth Committee at the fifty-ninth session and welcomed the decision of the Committee to revert to the agenda item entitled "Improving the working methods and procedures of the Committee for Programme and Coordination within the framework of its mandate", as a matter of priority, at the beginning of its forty-fifth session.

In paragraph 19 of its resolution 60/257, the General Assembly noted with concern that no conclusions or recommendations had been agreed to on improving the working methods and procedures of the Committee during its forty-fifth session, and emphasized the need for the Committee, within the framework of its mandate, to improve its working methods and procedures without having a negative impact on the effective consideration of other agenda items, in particular the proposed strategic framework for the period 2008-2009, as matters of priority, during its forty-sixth session.

7. Provisional agenda for the forty-seventh session

Pursuant to paragraph 3 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1894 (LVII), the Committee will have before it the draft provisional agenda for its forty-seventh session, with an indication of the documents to be submitted under each agenda item and the legislative authority for their preparation, in order to enable the Committee to consider those documents, their contribution to its work, their urgency and their relevance in the light of the current situation.

Documentation

Note by the Secretariat on the provisional agenda and documentation for the forty-seventh session of the Committee (E/AC.51/2006/L.3)

8. Adoption of the report of the Committee on its forty-sixth session

The report of the Committee on its forty-sixth session will be submitted to the Economic and Social Council at its substantive session of 2006 and to the General Assembly at its sixty-first session.

Documentation

Draft report of the Committee on the work of its forty-sixth session (E/AC.51/2006/L.4 and addenda)

Annex

Members of the Committee for Programme and Coordination for 2006*

Term expires on 31 December

Algeria	2007
Argentina	2008
Armenia	2008
Bahamas	2006
Belarus	2008
Benin	2008
Brazil	2008
Bulgaria	2008
Central African Republic	2008
China	2007
Comoros	2006
Cuba	2008
France	2006
Ghana	2007
India	2008
Indonesia	2008
Iran (Islamic Republic of)	2008
Israel	2008
Italy	2008
Jamaica	2007
Japan	2007
Kenya	2007
Mexico	2006
Pakistan	2008
Portugal	2008
Republic of Korea	2007
Russian Federation	2006
Senegal	2008
South Africa	2008
Switzerland	2008
United States of America	2006
Uruguay	2008
Zimbabwe	2006

* One seat from the Group of Western European and Other States remains to be filled.



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Item 3 (c) of the provisional agenda*

Programme questions: evaluation

Report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services on the thematic evaluation of knowledge management networks in the pursuit of the goals of the Millennium Declaration

Summary

As decided by the Committee for Programme and Coordination (CPC) at its forty-fifth session, the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) conducted a thematic evaluation of "Knowledge management networks in the pursuit of the goals of the Millennium Declaration". The report assesses the internal knowledge-sharing approaches, tools, activities and organizational infrastructure in the United Nations Secretariat, focusing on knowledge networks supporting the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

There is no common understanding of knowledge management or knowledge sharing in the Secretariat, and knowledge and information are often confused. "Knowledge management" is typically associated with disseminating information, which is only part of knowledge sharing. That emphasis overlooks the critical role cross-organizational collaboration and peer interaction plays in effective knowledge sharing. Systematically connecting staff with each other's ideas, insights and experiences is the core of most successful knowledge-sharing activities outside the United Nations.

* E/AC.51/2006/1.



Knowledge sharing in support of the MDGs is not sufficiently strategic, focused or well integrated with organizational objectives. Different departments take different approaches to internal knowledge sharing, which are mostly not systematic. The most common knowledge-sharing tools, such as e-mail, meetings and websites, while useful, do not work best in connecting staff seeking each other's insights, experiences and ideas. Information and knowledge sharing is not consistently integrated with daily work. Mechanisms and processes for capturing and transferring good practices, lessons learned and knowledge from departing staff are generally inadequate. Technology for knowledge sharing is generally available but not always used.

Many networks supporting the MDGs are personal and ad hoc. While important, they are only partially effective. Formal knowledge networks in the Secretariat form around a specific topic and share documents, link staff across organizational boundaries and enable them to ask for information and assistance. Knowledge networks with dedicated resources and staff encourage and sustain ongoing discussions among members, serve as a medium for sharing expertise in dealing with common problems and emergent issues and facilitate collaboration on common goals. While staff point to the positive impact of knowledge networks, such as improving efficiency, reducing duplication and improving work quality, direct measurement of network results is limited.

In the Secretariat, the knowledge-sharing culture is not always open, senior leadership support is limited, incentives and rewards are lacking, few organizational knowledge management strategies exist and there are minimal if any dedicated knowledge-sharing resources. However, staff interest in sharing knowledge around the MDGs is high, and departments are beginning to develop initiatives to support staff interest in using knowledge to do their jobs more effectively, including a new role for the Dag Hammarskjöld Library. Various system-wide and Secretariat initiatives have the potential to enhance how the Organization manages its knowledge.

The Office of Internal Oversight Services makes six recommendations to the Secretary-General, the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination, the Secretariat Task Force on Knowledge Sharing, the Department of Economic and Social Affairs and the Office of Human Resource Management. They include: addressing specific issues in a system-wide knowledge management strategy, tasking the Secretariat Task Force on Knowledge Sharing with developing a Secretariat knowledge-sharing strategy, developing a knowledge-sharing pilot project around report production, designating a dedicated Secretariat unit for facilitating and guiding knowledge sharing, incorporating knowledge sharing into the performance appraisal system and including a knowledge-sharing component in the staff development programme. Implementing those recommendations will make knowledge sharing more systematic and organized, integrate it with operations and better align the United Nations in supporting the achievement of the MDGs.

Contents

	<i>Paragraphs</i>	<i>Page</i>
I. Introduction	1-3	4
II. Methodology	4-5	4
III. Background	6-12	5
IV. Evaluation findings	13-68	7
A. There is no common understanding of knowledge management or knowledge sharing in the Secretariat, and knowledge and information are often confused	13-19	7
B. Current knowledge sharing in support of the Millennium Development Goals is not well focused, sufficiently strategic or well integrated with organizational objectives	20-35	9
C. Many Secretariat networks are informal and personal, but formal knowledge networks supporting the MDGs provide benefits to network members and to the Organization	36-46	13
D. Organizational culture and infrastructure do not always facilitate knowledge sharing	47-52	16
E. Some technology for knowledge sharing is available but not adequately utilized	53-55	18
F. Staff interest in sharing knowledge around the Millennium Development Goals is high, and Departments are recognizing the need to do this more effectively with various knowledge-sharing initiatives	56-60	19
G. The World Bank, UNDP and UNFPA offer models for advancing knowledge sharing in the Secretariat	61-68	21
V. Conclusion	69-70	23
VI. Recommendations	71-77	23
Annex. Programmes/Departments surveyed by the Office of Internal Oversight Services		27

I. Introduction

1. At its forty-fifth session, the Committee for Programme and Coordination (CPC) requested the Office of Internal Oversight Services to conduct a thematic evaluation of "Knowledge management networks in the pursuit of the goals of the Millennium Declaration" (A/60/16 and Corr.1, para 186). The objective is to assess the knowledge-sharing approaches, tools, activities and organizational infrastructure in the United Nations Secretariat, particularly focusing on knowledge networks that support the goals of the Millennium Declaration. The report has been reviewed by the relevant departments and offices and their comments for the most part incorporated.

2. The present evaluation focuses on internal knowledge-sharing capacity and practices in the Secretariat.¹ Both "knowledge management" and "knowledge sharing" are used interchangeably and defined as the systematic creation, organization, storage and sharing of knowledge in order to better achieve organizational goals. The Office of Internal Oversight Services recognizes the crucial importance of knowledge sharing between the United Nations and its external partners. However, since a systematic and comprehensive evaluation of knowledge sharing within the Secretariat has never been conducted, the Office of Internal Oversight Services decided that a review of internal knowledge management should precede a future broader assessment of external knowledge management.

3. The present evaluation examines how Secretariat entities share knowledge within and between themselves, both generally and within the context of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). It does not include an assessment of knowledge sharing with external partners (although some networks assessed include both internal and external members) and does not examine capacity-building of Member States in knowledge management. While the focus of the evaluation is on the Secretariat, for comparative purposes the Office of Internal Oversight Services also reviewed knowledge sharing at the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF).²

II. Methodology

4. The Office of Internal Oversight Services utilized the following eight evaluation methods:³ (1) a self-administered survey of 26 Secretariat departments/programmes;⁴ (2) a self-administered survey of a non-random sample of 51 divisions/subprogrammes whose work addresses the MDGs;⁵ (3) 48 interviews

¹ "Internal" is defined as within and between programmes.

² The Office of Internal Oversight Services consulted with the Joint Inspection Unit (JIU) during the conduct of the evaluation. It plans to assess knowledge management in the specialized agencies in 2006.

³ The Office of Internal Oversight Services was assisted by a knowledge management expert.

⁴ Referred to as the "Department survey" in the report. The survey was conducted from October to November 2005. Of 26 Departments/programmes surveyed, 23 responded. See the annex to the present document for all departments/programmes surveyed.

⁵ Referred to as the "Division survey" in the report. The survey was conducted from October to November 2005. Of 51 Divisions/subprogrammes surveyed, 31 responded.

with staff from all 26 Secretariat programmes, UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF, the United Nations Development Group (UNDG) Office, the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB) Secretariat, the United Nations Staff College, the World Bank, USAID and the Millennium Project; (4) a benchmarking of knowledge-sharing good practices;⁶ (5) an analysis of programme data in the Integrated Monitoring and Documentation Information System (IMDIS) and the Performance Appraisal System (ePas); (6) assessments of three different knowledge networks; (7) a review of knowledge-sharing tools and mechanisms;⁷ and (8) a desk review of relevant literature. Knowledge sharing in the Secretariat was benchmarked against acknowledged knowledge leaders from both the public and private sectors.

5. The methodology has several limitations. The evaluation is not a comprehensive assessment of all United Nations knowledge-sharing mechanisms and practices, and focuses primarily on those of greatest relevance to the MDGs; nor does it provide a credible inventory of all current knowledge management networks in the Secretariat owing to the wide diversity in how "knowledge network" is defined by its different entities.

III. Background

Knowledge management

6. Over the last two decades, organizations have viewed knowledge as a core asset and paid closer attention to how they develop, organize, store, share and use knowledge. Many develop a knowledge management strategy⁸ that typically outlines how the organization:

- Communicates knowledge about programmes and projects within and outside the organization
- Connects staff interested in cross-cutting topics to share ideas, help each other and move the organization's understanding of those topics forward
- Learns from projects and make that learning accessible to people in other parts of the organization
- Captures and organizes critical knowledge of staff as they transfer or retire
- Ties knowledge sharing to organizational goals
- Deepens and develops knowledge critical to the organization's success.

Knowledge networks

7. Knowledge networks are crucial to many successful knowledge management strategies.⁹ A knowledge network is broadly defined as a group of people sharing ideas and information around a specific topic and as the structures and relationships

⁶ The Office of Internal Oversight Services benchmarked two not-for-profit and three for-profit organizations formally recognized as knowledge management leaders.

⁷ Including websites, CD-ROMS and databases.

⁸ While all organizations develop and distribute knowledge, a knowledge management strategy attempts to be more intentional and coordinated in that approach.

⁹ The American Productivity and Quality Center, *Building and Sustaining Communities of Practice*, 2000.

allowing staff to brainstorm and create innovations. There are different types of networks in most organizations, ranging from personal networks to formal strategic knowledge networks.

8. All organizations have personal networks of individuals sharing ideas and helping each other with common work problems. Such networks have no focus, boundaries or sense of common identity, but are an important resource for professionals to find peers who can provide information or assist with work issues. They survive as long as individuals stay connected with each other.

9. Either spontaneously or deliberately, personal networks can merge around a common topic and evolve into knowledge networks with common domains and membership boundaries. Members share a common interest in the topic, help each other to solve problems and share documents, ideas and insights. Ideally, knowledge networks become fully integrated into the organization, with dedicated resources and staff, a strategy, special projects, incentives for member contributions and goals and deliverables. Active members develop a strategy for their domain and influence policy and practice. Ultimately, effective knowledge networks and their organizations demand greater coherence between network activities and results and the governance and operations of the organization.

10. Although knowledge networks might look like teams or other traditional work units, three characteristics distinguish them from those units:

- Networks are peer groups in which knowledge, not authority, reigns. Members use their knowledge and expertise to argue for a particular point of view
- Networks cross organizational boundaries without replacing the work of other organizational units. They influence those units to use the tools, ideas and insights they develop but have no authority to enforce compliance
- Networks have the space to deal with emergent problems and needs of members, rallying to help members solve technical issues.

11. While all types of networks have value, robust strategic knowledge networks are at the heart of many organizations' knowledge management because they are effective in crossing institutional boundaries and taking responsibility for achieving organizational goals. Typically not open to the public, knowledge networks can create a "safe" space in which members can deliberate problems, ask for help, and propose ideas without concern about being responsible for their soundness.

Knowledge as a core asset in support of MDGs

12. The United Nations Millennium Declaration sets out eight specific, time-bound goals to be met by 2015. In 2005, the Secretary-General reported on the achievement of the internationally agreed development goals, including those of the Millennium Declaration, stressing that the United Nations development agenda "cuts across a vast array of interlinked issues ranging from gender equality, social integration, health, employment, education, the environment and population to human rights, finance and governance", and that "there is clearly a need to build stronger and more systematic synergies between agencies with varying capacities of

normative and strategic functions".¹⁰ The effective utilization of a primary United Nations asset — its knowledge — is critical to meeting the broader development agenda. Information in the form of reports and other documents, combined with the research, analysis and expertise of staff, are among the primary resources the Secretariat uses to facilitate progress towards the MDGs. The challenge remains to systematically and efficiently develop, organize, share and integrate knowledge to achieve those cross-cutting goals.

IV. Evaluation findings

A. There is no common understanding of knowledge management or knowledge sharing in the Secretariat, and knowledge and information are often confused

Understanding of knowledge management

13. Knowledge management and knowledge sharing are perceived differently by different Secretariat entities. Departments and Divisions have widely varying levels of sophistication in their understanding of knowledge management and its role and importance in the United Nations. Most survey respondents report that there is no common definition of knowledge management in their Department or Division. The few definitions offered range conceptually from the sharing of documents and information to the structured capture, organization and storage of individual and group knowledge. Even within a single Department, those terms can have different meanings. For example, knowledge management is described as working on joint projects in one Division and as networking and sharing ideas in another Division in the same Department.

Knowledge and information

14. As recognized by knowledge management experts, knowledge is more than information.¹¹ Knowledge includes information but also incorporates ideas, experience, insights and awareness of "who's who" in an organization. In knowledge-based organizations, knowledge is typically thought to include informal advice, help with common problems, best practices and learning from other projects, only a small portion of which is documented. Much of this knowledge is tacit and travels across organizational boundaries through connections built in knowledge networks.

Knowledge as broadcast information

15. Many Secretariat staff describe "knowledge management" as a matter of broadcasting information in traditional, albeit often electronic ways. Consistent with that connotation, knowledge-sharing activities typically consist of posting information to a website or distributing information through reports or e-mail lists.

¹⁰ See *Towards achieving internationally agreed development goals, including those contained in the Millennium Declaration* (E/2005/56) summary and para. 96.

¹¹ Thomas H. Davenport and Laurence Prusak, *Working Knowledge*, pp. 1-6, Harvard Business School Press, 1998. Richard McDermott, "How Information Technology Inspired, But Cannot Deliver Knowledge Management", *California Management Review*, 41:4, 1999.

Understanding knowledge management to be primarily about information broadcasting is common in other organizations at the early stages of their knowledge management development. That understanding neglects other critical components of knowledge sharing, such as peer collaboration.

16. There are significant limitations to broadcasting information as a primary form of knowledge sharing. First, since published information is broadly available, it encourages publication of completed work rather than work in progress, and therefore may inhibit collaboration and consultation during document creation. Also, that strategy leaves it up to individuals or their organizations to determine what ideas, insights and guidelines to adopt and therefore fails to provide a wider forum for the give-and-take discussions required to create consensus on good practices, lessons learned and guidelines on issues crossing organizational boundaries. The limitations of information broadcasting as a knowledge management strategy are therefore especially significant to achieving the MDGs, given their cross-cutting and system-wide relevance.

17. The strong emphasis on information broadcasting in the Secretariat leads at times to overwhelming amounts of information. The time and effort needed to filter through all available information is not always cost effective. Both department and division survey respondents report that, on average, they spend about one third of their time on a typical work day looking for and obtaining knowledge. Staff interviewed by the Office of Internal Oversight Services point out that too much information, when not focused, can be distracting.

Articulation of knowledge management in the Secretariat

18. The Office of Internal Oversight Services did not discern a senior leadership vision for strengthening knowledge management in the Organization, despite being described in various documents as an important activity. For example, the Secretary-General's report entitled "Information and communication technologies for development: progress in the implementation of General Assembly resolution 57/295" states that in order for "the system to develop greater coherence in ... programme support within the broader framework of its Millennium Development Goals agenda, it must, first and foremost, be able to create, manage and share information and knowledge across the system more efficiently and effectively" (see A/59/563, para. 7). In an interview with iSeek on 22 December 2005, the Under-Secretary-General for Management acknowledged the importance of knowledge sharing but stated that the Secretariat has more to do in that area.

19. At programme and staff levels, knowledge management and knowledge sharing are minimally discussed. Out of 26,716 individual performance appraisal work plans in ePAS from 2001 to 2005, 741 made reference to "knowledge sharing", "knowledge management", "knowledge building" or "information management", representing just 3 per cent of ePAS work plans over four years. There are, however, more references to "collaboration", which is referenced 3,778 times (14 per cent of work plans). Furthermore, a search of the 2004-2005 programmes of work in IMDIS found only 128 references to similar terms, representing just 26 of over 192 subprogrammes. Examples include programme objectives for more efficient utilization of information and knowledge resources and networks in support of Africa's development (ECA subprogramme on harnessing information for development) and an objective for improved capacity of member

countries to share knowledge on energy, land and water-borne transport and infrastructure (ECLAC subprogramme on natural resources and infrastructure). Lastly, knowledge management and knowledge sharing are identified as competencies in the Office of Human Resources Management *Profile of an Effective Manager* and as a component in its *Profile of an Effective Department*, although they are discussed under broader categories of "Technical/substantive competence" and "Well-managed resources", respectively.

B. Current knowledge sharing in support of the Millennium Development Goals is not well focused, sufficiently strategic or well integrated with organizational objectives

Knowledge needs for supporting the MDGs

20. The Millennium Declaration has created knowledge needs among Secretariat staff but has not uniformly enhanced their access to the needed knowledge. Survey respondents report that in order to support the MDGs, staff most commonly need substantive knowledge about different development topics, statistical data, good practice information and region-specific knowledge. However, respondents say that staff members face gaps regarding expert knowledge, knowledge on available staff expertise and experience, knowledge about what other Departments and Divisions are doing, country-specific information and information specific to the MDGs.

Knowledge-sharing approach

21. The Office of Internal Oversight Services did not identify any single or consistent approach to how knowledge is shared internally in the Secretariat. Departments utilize a combination of different mechanisms and are at varied stages regarding their development as knowledge-based institutions. That lack of a common, systematic approach is exemplified by how survey respondents describe knowledge sharing within their Department or Division. Within Departments, knowledge sharing is largely described as being informal and ad hoc; only 7 of 23 respondents say knowledge sharing within their Department is systematic. Between departments, knowledge most commonly takes place through formal mechanisms, but only 4 of 23 respondents say that is systematic. Within Divisions, just over half of respondents say knowledge sharing within the Division is systematic; however, far fewer (just 13 per cent) say it is systematic between Divisions in the same Department.

22. Overall, the Office of Internal Oversight Services determined that knowledge sharing tends to be stronger and more effective within divisions than within and between Departments. That may be due in part to staff reliance on traditional means of knowledge sharing with immediate colleagues and the tendency to work in small teams within a single unit. However, since supporting the MDGs requires organization-wide collaboration, that paradigm must change. The Millennium Declaration agenda has focused and defined work programmes, but has not yet led to accompanying new strategies and mechanisms for system-wide knowledge sharing.

Knowledge-sharing tools

23. Secretariat staff use various tools to share knowledge with their colleagues, most of which are simple and do not facilitate a process of dynamic collaboration between peer groups. Most survey respondents report daily use of e-mail (the most commonly used tool), telephone, teleconferences and meetings, and at least weekly use of internal and other United Nations websites and iSeek. Other tools used for knowledge sharing include newsletters, staff meetings and databases. More interactive tools, such as electronic discussion boards, instant messaging and web conferences, are reportedly used only by a minority of Secretariat staff.

24. Websites are often described as an important vehicle for sharing knowledge. They cover a broad range of topics and are commonly used to disseminate information related to the MDGs. An Office of Internal Oversight Services review of websites found them to be generally accessible, informative and easy to navigate; they contain useful, timely and relevant information. However, there is no index of all Millennium Declaration-related websites, no common structure and no guides for users on how to effectively search and use those sites. Furthermore, few of the websites accommodate the sharing of immediate (emergency) knowledge, and they do not typically facilitate peer-to-peer interactions and connections.

25. The Office of Internal Oversight Services notes that the most commonly used tools encourage certain types of behaviour but discourage others. They encourage the publishing of information but do not foster collaboration among colleagues. They also do not facilitate an important component of knowledge creation — the opportunity to think, to reflect and to deepen expertise. Fewer than half of survey respondents agree that staff take the time to meet and reflect with their team on what went wrong and what could be done better after completion of an assignment.

Staff connections

26. Strategic knowledge sharing connecting the people who need each other's insights, experience and ideas does not occur routinely and systematically in the Secretariat. For example, while it is possible to find staff contact information on iSeek, there is no central repository on staff technical expertise, work activities and experience. That is particularly vital to achieving the MDGs, since staff in different parts of the Secretariat and other United Nations entities work on the same issues, albeit in a normative, analytical or operational capacity. The Office of Internal Oversight Services notes that the value of staff collaboration is to obtain multiple points of view, to encourage collaborative thinking around common problems, to learn from peer experience and to reduce redundancy. Mechanisms, such as knowledge networks, are needed to enable that to occur.

Integration of knowledge sharing into work activities

27. Information and knowledge on the MDGs is not consistently integrated with daily work processes. The Office of Internal Oversight Services observed that processes for contributing knowledge are not seamlessly integrated into work activities. One example is typical report production, where knowledge sharing with peers is often an ancillary and not a core part of the work process. While experts acknowledge that it is impossible to truly "manage" knowledge, the goal of effective knowledge management is to improve work performance. Other organizations with more advanced knowledge management have demonstrated that a systematic

approach to harnessing knowledge, with tools, mechanisms and practices structured around daily work processes and organizational goals, has a noticeable impact.

28. Staff report limitations in their ability to tap into the Organization's knowledge assets. Only a minority of department survey respondents agree that staff routinely ask how they can leverage their knowledge in other areas, close to half say that the Organization does poorly with integrating knowledge sharing into day-to-day work and fewer than half believe that staff can identify colleagues who can benefit from their knowledge. The Office of Internal Oversight Services notes that limited integration of knowledge-sharing activities with work processes is one of the biggest challenges to knowledge sharing in the Secretariat. That situation contrasts with the practices of other knowledge-based institutions, which have established regular mechanisms for leveraging knowledge to improve performance, such as building a common work space where staff can post urgent requests for knowledge that they then apply to overcome immediate problems.

Knowledge sharing guidelines

29. The Office of Internal Oversight Services identified few specific guidelines and standards for the effective storage, dissemination and utilization of knowledge, and none that were Secretariat-wide; nor are there common standards regarding what, how and with whom knowledge should be shared. That is an obstacle to knowledge sharing.

Capture and dissemination of good practices and lessons learned

30. A further significant limitation in how knowledge is shared in the Secretariat is the lack of a consistent and efficient strategy for identifying, capturing, recording and disseminating good practices and lessons learned. Consequently, lessons learned often become lessons lost. Survey respondents report that staff are not likely to identify and share good practices and lessons learned within their Department or Division, nor are they likely to document the ideas, information and experiences that could be useful to others. They report only occasionally, rarely disseminating their expert knowledge. Evaluations are often a good source of lessons learned and good practices. Although all Departments are required to regularly evaluate their activities, that does not occur uniformly, and there is no central repository of Secretariat evaluation reports that staff can access and apply to their own work.

31. Organizations benchmarked by the Office of Internal Oversight Services have mechanisms in place for capturing and using that valuable knowledge asset. The Office believes that a common framework, based on established criteria, methodologies and protocols, is needed for getting good practices and lessons learned to the right people at the right time. Some Departments are making an effort to capture good practices and lessons learned. For example, UN-Habitat maintains a Best Practice Database on issues related to the MDGs that is shared with all stakeholders.

Capture and transfer of institutional knowledge

32. Another significant obstacle to Secretariat knowledge sharing is the lack of a systematic approach for capturing institutional knowledge when staff leave or retire. Experts agree that increased retirements cause lost knowledge, which affects organizational performance and whose costs are largely hidden. A large majority of

survey respondents say that issue is of great or moderate concern (most respondents at the Department level say it is of great concern). In one programme in the past year, all six senior managers retired within a few months, with no plans to systematically capture and transfer their expertise. The Office of Internal Oversight Services was not able to identify mechanisms for capturing institutional knowledge aside from formal exit interviews, handover notes, informal handover to replacements and overlapping time periods between new and departing staff. A more robust process involves three components: determining what expertise to capture, extracting that expertise and creating a structure for learning the expertise.

Current United Nations knowledge management initiatives

33. Three initiatives have the potential to facilitate a more systematic and strategic approach to knowledge sharing in the Organization. The first, the Secretariat Task Force on Knowledge Sharing, led by the Dag Hammarskjöld Library, was created to develop a Secretariat knowledge-sharing agenda.¹² The Office of Internal Oversight Services endorses plans to expand membership of the Task Force by including other substantive Departments and to encourage senior staff membership. However, the Office of Internal Oversight Services believes the Task Force is constrained by its current placement in the United Nations Information and Communications Technology Board since it implies overemphasis on technology.

34. The second, the CEB Task Force on Knowledge Sharing, will be formed to develop a knowledge-sharing strategy for the United Nations system, focusing on information needs and devising a framework for inter-agency cooperation. Beginning with an assessment of the existing environment, the Task Force will determine the types of knowledge-sharing activities the system should engage in and develop a road map for implementing an overall cohesive strategy. The Office of Internal Oversight Services supports that approach and is hopeful that that effort will lead to the establishment of an overall coordinated approach to knowledge sharing in the United Nations.

35. The third, a pilot knowledge-sharing project of the undg Working Group on Knowledge Management, combines four organizational knowledge-sharing models around the topic of HIV/AIDS.¹³ The project will be piloted in three regions by the end of 2006. The Office of Internal Oversight Services believes that it can play an important role in defining and implementing a more strategic and focused approach to knowledge sharing in support of the MDGs but notes that wider Secretariat involvement will be needed for it to be more effective.

¹² Current members are from the Dag Hammarskjöld Library, Department for General Assembly and Conference Management and Office of Human Resources Management and the Information Technology and Services Division in the Department of Management.

¹³ The project includes a knowledge asset guided by UNFPA, knowledge networks guided by UNDP, an online document system guided by the World Health Organization (WHO) and a training module guided by UNICEF.

C. Many Secretariat networks are informal and personal, but formal knowledge networks supporting the MDGs provide benefits to network members and to the Organization

Understanding of knowledge networks

36. As with knowledge management, there is no common understanding across the Secretariat of a "knowledge network." When describing knowledge networks, staff often refer to informal personal networks, ad hoc in nature and haphazard. Others refer to more formal and structured networks bringing together staff working on similar topics and issues. In analysing the networks described by survey respondents, the Office of Internal Oversight Services discerned three categories: (1) personal networks; (2) knowledge networks without dedicated resources; and (3) knowledge networks with dedicated resources.

Personal networks

37. The Secretariat is laced with informal personal networks. Many staff participate in those networks without perceiving them to be "knowledge management". Personal networking as a primary means of connecting staff is typical of organizations at the early stages of their knowledge management development. However, those networks have limitations. Since they are limited to relationships people build, they are constrained by the connections staff make in their work and tend to be concentrated within single work units and geographic locations. Furthermore, personal networks are dependent on the degree to which individuals maintain their connections, and since they are not systemic, they slow down or stall when people leave.

Knowledge networks without dedicated resources

38. Some United Nations networks form around a topic rather than a personal relationship and are a forum in which staff working on similar issues share information, ideas and experiences. Members also share organizational goals common to the network topic. They are formal knowledge networks. Formal knowledge networks typically share the following characteristics:

- They are organized around a specific topic
- The topic is tied to a strategic organizational goal
- They have membership boundaries and a common agenda
- They organize documents and news related to their topic and make them accessible to members
- Members have a common identity with the network, reflected in their common website and a sense of obligation to respond to requests from other members
- Members can identify other network members and expect to receive replies to inquiries from members they do not personally know.

39. However, many Secretariat knowledge networks have no dedicated resources or facilitator and limited collaborative mechanisms. They therefore often have difficulty maintaining a robust community of practice over time. The Office of Internal Oversight Services noted several examples of such networks in the

Secretariat. The Inter-Agency Network on Women and Gender Equality, which is chaired by the Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women and supported by the Division for the Advancement of Women in the Department of Economic and Social Affairs. All gender focal points in the United Nations system are members. The network carries out its work through task forces on different topics, including one on the MDGs. It has an annual meeting in conjunction with the Commission on the Status of Women and intersessional meetings. Much work is carried out electronically, including through teleconferences. The Inter-Agency Network has a comprehensive website (WomenWatch) which provides information and direct links to all electronic information available on the gender equality work of the United Nations. The site can be used for online electronic discussions.

Knowledge networks with dedicated resources

40. A few knowledge networks have dedicated resources. In addition to the characteristics described in paragraph 38 above, the networks have the following components:

- They have an active and dedicated facilitator who takes responsibility for sustaining the network
- They have a dedicated budget to administer the networks
- They encourage ongoing, typically electronic, discussions among members, and monitor those discussions, providing a bounded space in which members are comfortable seeking information and assistance
- They develop an overall network strategy
- They have mechanisms for supporting collaborative interaction that break down knowledge silos
- They distribute insights and ideas rapidly and cross-fertilize ideas to encourage innovation.

41. The Office of Internal Oversight Services noted few knowledge networks with dedicated resources in the Secretariat, including:¹⁴

- The undg MDG Network, which began in January 2002 originally to support United Nations country teams and Governments in producing high-quality MDG reports. Since then, the focus of the network has shifted to more general topics related to the Millennium Development Goals. The network hosts electronic discussions, research (including consolidated replies to discussions and news updates) and is managed by a full-time facilitator. It has over 2,000 members representing over 25 different United Nations entities
- The Department of Peacekeeping Operations Rule of Law Network, which was created in 2005 to increase connectivity among staff working on rule of law issues in the peacekeeping, peace support or post-conflict context. Membership is limited to United Nations staff involved in rule of law issues. The network has a facilitator, who manages electronic discussions based on member queries and puts together consolidated responses. As of January 2006,

¹⁴ The MDG Network, while not exclusively a Secretariat network, was included because Secretariat staff are members and it is particularly relevant to the evaluation topic.

the network had 188 members who ask questions of each other, exchange documents, experiences and feedback and access common resources such as databases.

42. With dedicated resources, the knowledge networks provide services which increase membership and foster greater knowledge sharing. They include providing translated consolidated replies to all network queries, cross-referencing the same topic on multiple networks and using expert guest moderators. The Rule of Law Network, for example, cross-posts queries with the UNDP Crisis Prevention and Recovery and Democratic Governance Networks. The UNDP Human Rights Network is now a United Nations-system network on the topic of applying a rights-based approach to development. The Office of Internal Oversight Services endorses those practices as facilitating greater inter-agency synergies in support of the Millennium Development Goals.

43. The Office of Internal Oversight Services notes issues related to knowledge networks warranting further consideration. They include: limited resources; the need for organizational culture and incentives to encourage open and honest dialogue; the tendency of few members to dominate discussions; uneven participation among regions and offices; debate on whether the focus of networks should be formulated "top down" or "bottom up"; lack of consensus on maximum membership size; how to approach governance and management when networks become very large; lack of management understanding and engagement in the networks; and debate on whether networks should include expert or practitioner knowledge or both. However, the Office of Internal Oversight Services notes that those are common issues in network development and other organizations have reached practicable resolutions.

Impact of United Nations networks

44. While Secretariat knowledge networks have done little to directly track their impact, members believe that they have had a positive impact on both participants and the Organization. Most survey respondents believe that knowledge networks improve efficiency, reduce time to solve problems, improve staff competence, reduce duplication and improve productivity and quality. However, the link between knowledge networks and organizational performance improvement is not always well defined; survey respondents offer few examples of the direct connection between networks and their impact. Studies have shown that organizations that directly measure intellectual capital are able to better align knowledge-sharing activities with business strategy, improve stakeholder communication and more effectively manage knowledge resources.¹⁵

45. Knowledge networks assessed by the Office of Internal Oversight Services have measured or will attempt to measure impact. The MDG Network conducted a user survey from November 2004 to January 2005 which found that more than half of members had contributed to the network and that a large majority rated it useful. Specific feedback included appreciation for the practical field experience shared, enrichment gained about Millennium Development Goals and high ratings in particular for the consolidated replies. The Department of Peacekeeping Operations Rule of Law Network will be reviewed in March 2006, but the growth and interest

¹⁵ Optima Media Group, *Measuring knowledge and intellectual capital*, 2003.

in the network in the first six months since its launch is indicative of its usefulness to participants in sharing information, ideas and expertise on rule of law issues.

The future of knowledge networks in the Secretariat

46. The Office of Internal Oversight Services notes that personal networks will and should continue to play an important role in the Secretariat but are insufficient to support the degree of knowledge sharing needed for effective support of the Millennium Development Goals. Since staff understands that knowledge is an asset, are already networked through personal contacts and are interested in improving their knowledge use, knowledge networks have strong potential for the Secretariat. One staff member articulates their potential by stating that knowledge networks should move the agenda forward, enhance understanding and result in a better product. Effective knowledge networks help individuals to develop skills and competencies, provide ways to stay current and foster a sense of community with colleagues. For the Organization, they push strategy forward, enable faster problem solving and improve the process of finding, assembling and analysing experience, ideas and insights to support the Millennium Development Goals.

D. Organizational culture and infrastructure do not always facilitate knowledge sharing

Organizational culture

47. While commonly accepted that organizational culture must support and facilitate knowledge sharing, and that the right cultural values and norms are needed to encourage knowledge-sharing behaviour, the Office of Internal Oversight Services noted that such a culture does not consistently exist in the Secretariat. A majority of Department survey respondents rate the culture of sharing information and knowledge as only fair or poor, and most rate openness to sharing new ideas as fair or poor. Collaboration is also generally rated negatively. In contrast, the organizational culture at the Division level appears to be somewhat better. Over half of Division survey respondents rate the culture of sharing in their Division as excellent or good, while an even stronger majority say that openness to sharing new ideas and collaboration is equally strong.

Senior leadership support

48. Knowledge sharing must be supported by senior leaders who understand what it is and how it can be used to better the Organization. Cultural limitations and lack of leadership support are among the most serious challenges identified by survey respondents. Less than half of survey respondents say that senior leaders place a very high or high priority on knowledge management. Outside the United Nations, senior leadership support is key to effective knowledge sharing. At one major organization, the visible vision and endorsement of leadership regarding the crucial role of knowledge sharing, as well as the expectation that staff systematically share their knowledge, had a strong impact on staff behaviour. At another large multinational company, senior managers regularly review the goals and accomplishments of knowledge networks (one of the company's primary knowledge mechanisms), and express their appreciation of the networks and their expectations for their future goals, deliverables and contributions.

Incentives and rewards

49. The Office of Internal Oversight Services was unable to identify any systemic incentives or rewards for knowledge sharing in the Secretariat. All Department survey respondents and all but one Division survey respondents report that the system of incentives and rewards for knowledge sharing is inadequate. Furthermore, the report on the triennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system (A/59/85-E/2004/68) identified a lack of incentives and institutional reward systems to encourage entities to make their knowledge available system-wide as a significant constraint to utilizing the expertise of the entire United Nations system. That differs significantly from other organizational knowledge management practices, where knowledge sharing is acknowledged as an important organizational value and openly rewarded. Few Departments or sample Divisions have an explicit staff core competency or formal staff recognition for knowledge sharing that defines expectations for staff actively participating in knowledge-sharing activities.

Dedicated resources

50. The Secretariat devotes far fewer resources to knowledge sharing than the funds and programmes or private and public sector knowledge leaders. Nearly all Departments and Divisions surveyed lack a separate budget for knowledge management, and few have a dedicated unit or staff position with responsibility for knowledge sharing.¹⁶ The Office of Internal Oversight Services believes that, given industry benchmarks, the lack of dedicated knowledge resources significantly impedes Secretariat progress in knowledge management. Such dedicated resources are needed to ensure that due attention and effort are given to conceptualizing, designing, implementing and maintaining knowledge-sharing systems and mechanisms, as well as guiding and facilitating their use.

Knowledge management strategies

51. Only 4 of 26 Departments and 11 of 31 of the sample Divisions report having an explicit strategy or policy for organizing, storing and sharing knowledge. Few are fully integrated into the department or divisional work programme or address sharing knowledge with other United Nations entities. As noted in paragraph 6 above, explicit strategies play a key role by defining knowledge-sharing expectations, frameworks, tools and links with work processes.

Organizational learning

52. Organizational learning around knowledge sharing is limited. Current Office of Human Resources Management training programmes for leadership, management and teamwork do not explicitly address knowledge sharing. The United Nations System Staff College has organized workshops and seminars on knowledge management strategies and techniques for specialized agencies, which included the participation of the World Bank and industry experts. The Office of Internal

¹⁶ Three sections have "knowledge" in their title — the Knowledge Management Branch of the Division for Public Administration and Development Management in the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, the Knowledge Sharing Section of the Dag Hammarskjöld Library in the Department of Public Information and the Knowledge Management Systems Section of the Development and New Technologies Service in the Department of Management.

Oversight Services believes that such efforts are important for staff learning, but more is needed to provide a forum for staff at all levels to understand how best to share and utilize knowledge in their work.

E. Some technology for knowledge sharing is available but not adequately utilized

Technological tools

53. Various technologies are available in the Secretariat to enhance knowledge sharing, but they are not commonly used. Staff can use instant messaging, which enables them to see who else is online and available anytime, and electronic discussion boards, although only a minority report doing so regularly. Furthermore, very few staff report using electronic tools designed specifically for knowledge management; they include Yahoo groups, Net meeting, eRoom, eCommunity, Sharepoint, Documentum and Sametime. Survey respondents believe that Information Technology (IT) systems for connecting to information are generally stronger than IT systems designed specifically to support knowledge sharing. Typically, IT applications needed to support knowledge sharing include search capability, threaded discussion capability, common platforms for storage and retrieval, collaborative work spaces, virtual communities of practice, an integrated library system, lessons learned repositories and databases to track staff skills and competencies. Knowledge leaders typically identify and endorse a standard suite of tools for integrating knowledge across the Organization.

Information Technology initiatives

54. Two ongoing IT initiatives have the potential to strengthen technological capacity for knowledge sharing. First, the Department of Management is developing an Electronic Content Management (ECM) platform that will incorporate e-management, knowledge sharing and services to intergovernmental bodies. The knowledge management component will establish common platforms for sharing knowledge and address how information is delivered. Second, under the guidance of CEB, a system-wide Information and Communications Technology (ICT) Strategy is being developed as part of an overall effort to strengthen capacity to manage knowledge in order to maximize the support provided to countries in using ICT for achieving the Millennium Development Goals.

Role of information technology

55. The Office of Internal Oversight Services notes that the ICT function in the United Nations is an important enabler of knowledge, as it is in other knowledge-based organizations. In none of the organizations benchmarked by the Office of Internal Oversight Services, however, was knowledge management responsibility given solely to a technology unit (all have a separate and dedicated knowledge management office). In order to ensure an integrated approach incorporating content, ITC should work in conjunction with other enablers of knowledge management, including the library and human resource functions. Technological tools are leverage points for sharing knowledge and should be a part of a larger effort to change practices, processes and behaviours.

F. Staff interest in sharing knowledge around the Millennium Development Goals is high, and Departments are recognizing the need to do this more effectively with various knowledge-sharing initiatives

Staff interest in knowledge sharing

56. The Office of Internal Oversight Services noted strong staff interest in enhancing knowledge sharing and a common agreement that knowledge is a core asset of the United Nations. In both interviews and survey responses, staff stress that they want more information on how to better utilize knowledge to do their work in more innovative and effective ways. The Office of Internal Oversight Services notes that staff are open to the better use of knowledge and recognize that they use only a fraction of what is available since they are often too busy to make better use of knowledge assets. Many staff interviewed by the Office of Internal Oversight Services express interest in learning more about what others in the Organization are doing to effectively share knowledge. A majority of survey respondents say staff are willing to share information about what is happening in their substantive areas and to help each other solve common work issues and problems. Similarly, a majority rate staff willingness to ask for help as excellent or good.

Dag Hammarskjöld Library

57. In the Secretariat, the Dag Hammarskjöld Library has been assigned the lead for knowledge management and is changing its role to meet that responsibility.¹⁷ Following the slogan "from collections to connections", the Library has several initiatives to strengthen internal communication and knowledge sharing. Its Knowledge Sharing Section incorporates an Internal Communications Unit tasked with identifying more effective methods to communicate within the Secretariat and developing a strategy to ensure a systematic approach to the issue. The Unit redesigned iSeek in August 2005 to become a worldwide United Nations Intranet that connects staff with management, shares consistent messages, posts up-to-date information and connects staff with work tools. In 2005, the Library sponsored a lectures and conversations series that brought in leading experts to share their insights and experiences on different topics for audiences including United Nations staff and Member States. One seminar, with leading experts in the field, focused on knowledge management. Furthermore, the Library has a Personal Knowledge Management Programme designed to assist all United Nations staff members with maximizing tools and techniques for knowledge management. Specific activities include personal interviews to determine information and knowledge needs, personal coaching and team sessions. Since December 2005, 115 coaching sessions have been delivered.

Other knowledge-sharing initiatives

58. The Office of Internal Oversight Services noted other initiatives that tap into staff interest in sharing knowledge. While not exhaustive, the list includes the following:

¹⁷ A proposal is being considered to call it the "Dag Hammarskjöld Library and Knowledge Sharing Centre".

- The Department of Peacekeeping Operations knowledge management tool kit incorporates a methodology as well as reporting and dissemination protocols for after-action reviews, end-of-assignment reports, handover notes and practice surveys (incorporating both good and bad practices as well as lessons learned). Those tools provide a common platform for capturing, codifying and disseminating knowledge gained from field and project experience
- ESCAP has endorsed knowledge management as an organizational initiative to help it to attain its three-pronged objective of managing globalization, reducing poverty and addressing emerging social issues. A knowledge management/ICT committee and its knowledge management task force are in place to develop a strategy for ESCAP with specific activities to be undertaken in the immediate and long term. With the assistance of UNDP, a workshop was held in March 2005
- The UN-Habitat mission roster provides information about all recent UN-Habitat missions and can be searched by various criteria, including staff member and mission country. By potentially connecting peers with similar knowledge needs and interests, it has a more collaborative component that could be further exploited
- ReliefWeb is a web-based information system for humanitarian response, administered by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, to strengthen the response capacity of the international humanitarian community through the rapid dissemination of reliable information on emergencies and disasters. The site received an average of 2.5 million page views per month in 2005, with major peaks in use after the South Asian 2004 tsunami and 2005 earthquake.

United Nations as a convener of knowledge

59. While outside the evaluation scope of internal knowledge sharing, an initiative of the United Nations country team in India is worth discussing for the noteworthy approach taken to knowledge sharing. Significantly, the project has helped to define a new role for the United Nations at the country level — from provider of development advice and financial support to knowledge convener. “Solution Exchange” is a knowledge-sharing project with the overall goal of problem-solving in support of India’s development priorities that correspond to the Millennium Development Goals. It consists of 10 communities of development practitioners (working in the United Nations, Government and other institutions) formed around such topics as health, poverty, education and environment. Members engage in online discussions and exchanges, with a network moderator and researcher synthesizing each discussion to capture the knowledge shared as a documented product. The head of the relevant local United Nations entity acts as the community’s convener, and a steering committee defines the agenda. The Office of Internal Oversight Services believes that that project could be replicated by regional commissions as well as by other country teams, with cross-cutting networks utilized for disseminating knowledge between countries.

Measurement of knowledge sharing

60. The measurement of knowledge-sharing tools and activities is important in obtaining greater organizational support and buy-in. Only one Department reports

measuring the impact of its internal knowledge-sharing activities. While measurement of knowledge sharing is difficult, with no agreed-upon comprehensive methodology, there are indicators of knowledge sharing that can be used to gauge performance. The World Bank considered the three main benefits of its knowledge sharing to be the greater speed of service, enhanced quality of work and greater innovation. Other benefits of knowledge sharing reported by survey respondents include a significant or moderate impact on increasing work efficiency, reducing duplication, improving quality, introducing new work methods and approaches and improving staff competence. While admittedly self-reported, those benefits are proxy measures of the positive impact of knowledge-sharing activities.

G. The World Bank, UNDP and UNFPA offer models for advancing knowledge-sharing in the Secretariat

Knowledge-sharing models

61. Knowledge sharing in the World Bank, UNDP and UNFPA is more advanced than in the Secretariat. All three take a systematic and strategic approach to managing their knowledge, although using different models. The Office of Internal Oversight Services sees merit in each one, recognizing that they offer advantages and limitations. The Secretariat must use a model that best fits its knowledge needs, organizational goals and cultural norms.

Knowledge sharing in the World Bank

62. Following a clear and distinct senior leadership vision, the World Bank has taken steps to transform itself into a knowledge leader. Building on the premise that fighting poverty requires a global knowledge-sharing strategy, sharing at the Bank is about "making this knowledge readily accessible to a wide audience internally and externally, and creating linkages between groups and communities working on similar topics".¹⁸ The Bank intentionally focused first on its internal knowledge sharing before turning to external knowledge sharing, and has also shifted from an early emphasis on capturing and organizing knowledge to adopting, adapting and applying knowledge to help staff and partners work more effectively to reduce poverty. Current knowledge-sharing programmes include knowledge networks, help desk and advisory services, knowledge collections on the web, "tacit" knowledge debriefings and a platform to share knowledge with the development community through the Development Gateway website. According to World Bank staff, several factors were key in turning the Bank into a knowledge leader: strong leadership, a compelling business case, enthusiastic and dedicated knowledge champions, organizational communication on knowledge management activities, financial incentives and recognition in employee performance.

63. Limitations to knowledge sharing at the World Bank illustrate the challenges faced by the Secretariat. According to a World Bank evaluation, three main challenges are: linking knowledge sharing more directly with the Bank's core operational work; capturing lessons learned and good practices more systematically; and strengthening content management to ensure quality and operational

¹⁸ World Bank Knowledge Sharing pamphlet, <http://www.worldbank.org/ks>.

relevance.¹⁹ The evaluation identified two major shortcomings of the Bank's knowledge strategy — the lack of an adequate plan for transitioning from building and championing new knowledge-sharing tools to mainstreaming the tools and the lack of mechanisms to benchmark effectiveness and make necessary adjustments.

Knowledge sharing in UNDP

64. UNDP has focused its knowledge sharing around five development practice areas. They bring together staff from different offices into voluntary, flexible communities that inform members about new activities, share experiences and good practices and facilitate discussion of substantive issues. Linked primarily by an electronic network, they are also supported by face-to-face meetings and other activities. A standardized product called a "consolidated reply" is provided within an average of 10 days after each electronic discussion of a topic, synthesizing expertise and experience around that topic. UNDP has 20 current networks, 4 open to non-UNDP staff. The networks are assessed through an annual headquarters products and services survey, and in 2004, 92 per cent of staff members reported that participation in a network benefited their office, while 86 per cent stated that it benefited their professional development. In 2004, the networks were reviewed by an independent panel of knowledge experts, who commended the networks' energy and responsiveness.

65. UNDP regional offices also have knowledge teams that build staff capacity, act as a regional hub in collecting, organizing and disseminating knowledge, design knowledge products, advise staff on tools and platforms and develop regional networks. The Bangkok regional office hosted a "knowledge fair" in which different entities set up booths to display and share their knowledge products and the Johannesburg regional office is looking at indigenous methods of knowledge sharing, such as story telling.

66. UNDP acknowledged a need to better mainstream its knowledge management into its business processes and developed a formal knowledge management strategy in 2004. The subsequent shift away from a "bottom-up" to a more "top-down" approach has led to ongoing debate within the organization about the right knowledge model to meet its goals.

Knowledge sharing in UNFPA

67. The integrated approach to knowledge sharing in UNFPA is about staff interaction, guided by organizational processes and enabled by technology. Its cornerstone is the Knowledge Asset Development System. Knowledge assets are "living repositories of collective know-how" and are developed around specific issues. Each asset contains distilled experiential knowledge; is based on work processes; presents information in a question-and-answer format; links to examples and further reading; has links to experts for additional guidance; and is developed, updated and supported by a network of staff. Since 2004, UNFPA launched nine knowledge assets on priority topics such as sexual and reproductive health and human rights based approach to programming. Their primary audience is UNFPA country office staff. UNFPA also has a knowledge-sharing strategy, a dedicated knowledge unit and budget, a knowledge-sharing competency for all staff, templates

¹⁹ *Sharing Knowledge: Innovations and Remaining Challenges*, Operations Evaluation Department, 2003.

for collecting lessons learned and DocuShare, an Internet-based repository of internal and external resources and publications.

68. UNFPA faces challenges in its knowledge management programme. While knowledge assets have been built around work processes, UNFPA has not yet been able to conclusively demonstrate if they have improved performance. Further, while a staff knowledge sharing core competency has been important in signalling organizational values around knowledge sharing, staff say the competency and its measurement are still not adequately defined.

V. Conclusion

69. The Office of Internal Oversight Services identified significant limitations in how the Secretariat develops, captures, shares and uses one of its core assets — its knowledge. Recognizing that the ultimate goal of knowledge sharing is to improve organizational performance, the Secretariat needs to harness its knowledge assets more efficiently and effectively. It needs to become a world class knowledge leader, one with senior leadership vision and support, adequate tools, systems, mechanisms, and resources, an organizational culture that encourages knowledge-sharing behaviours and a strategy that integrates knowledge sharing with everyday work practices. Successful knowledge sharing fosters innovation, promotes trust and improves decision-making. The Secretariat needs to maximize knowledge sharing through maximizing connectivity — letting people know what others know and how they can use that to perform better in their own jobs — and creating norms and values that encourage the sharing of knowledge. While dedicated resources are essential, knowledge sharing must eventually be seen as everybody's business.

70. Given the breadth of the Millennium Declaration, knowledge sharing is crucial to crossing organizational boundaries and integrating the normative, analytical and operational work of the Organization. Robust knowledge networks with genuine resources and support have strong potential for facilitating such inter-agency synergies. According to Secretariat staff, the most effective way to improve knowledge sharing in support of the Millennium Development Goals is to create greater harmonization and coordination among knowledge-sharing practices and to systematize knowledge sharing across the Organization. Knowledge sharing in the Secretariat needs to be about connecting staff with the right knowledge to their peers who need and use the knowledge, by taking an integrated approach incorporating information content, technology and people. Finally, the Office of Internal Oversight Services notes that any efforts to enhance knowledge sharing must be strongly linked to organizational reform.

VI. Recommendations

71. Based on the evaluation findings, the Office of Internal Oversight Services makes the following six recommendations. Some are directed at existing initiatives to strengthen knowledge sharing both at the Secretariat and system-wide level. The recommendations have been agreed to by clients but with some decisions regarding reporting lines and governance deferred to reform resulting from the report of the Secretary-General "Investing in the United Nations: for a stronger Organization worldwide" (A/60/692 and Corr.1).

A. Knowledge-sharing strategy

Recommendation 1

72. **The Chief Executives Board**, when developing a United Nations system-wide knowledge management strategy, should specifically address the following issues (in addition to those already spelled out in the Terms of Reference for its Task Force on Knowledge Sharing):

- (a) A common understanding of what knowledge sharing entails and why it is important;
- (b) A clear taxonomy for different types of knowledge networks and the role played by each type of network, encouraging movement where possible to more strategic, focused and cross-cutting organizational networks;
- (c) A shift in focus from knowledge sharing as primarily broadcasting information to a combination of information, collaboration and peer interactions;
- (d) A strategy for integrating knowledge sharing more fully into work processes. To the extent possible, the strategy should use the results of the pilot knowledge-sharing project discussed in recommendation 4 below.

Recommendation 2

73. **The Secretariat Task Force on Knowledge Sharing** should develop a Secretariat-wide knowledge strategy, in conjunction with the system-wide strategy being developed by the CEB and concurrently with the reform process and organizational change initiatives. The strategy should in particular promote the role of knowledge networks in strengthening knowledge sharing within the Secretariat and with external partners, developing a model and methodology for how those networks can best work. In doing that, the Task Force may want to look at the knowledge-sharing model being piloted by the undg Knowledge Management Working Group. The Office of Internal Oversight Services notes that the reporting lines for the Task Force will be decided in the course of the ongoing reform resulting from the report of the Secretary-General on United Nations reform (A/60/692 and Corr.1). The Office of Internal Oversight Services trusts that a decision on reporting lines will not be delayed.

B. Knowledge-sharing pilot project

Recommendation 3

74. **The Department of Economic and Social Affairs**, as a major author Department of Secretariat reports in the economic and social areas and convener of the Executive Committee on Economic and Social Affairs, should conduct a pilot project on further integrating knowledge sharing in the report production process, with a view to determining the utility, costs, limitations and results of more effective knowledge sharing. The Department should review the current production process for one or more specific reports and identify key points where broader knowledge sharing could occur. The pilot project should result in developing a methodology for further integrating knowledge sharing in daily work processes in order to improve the quality and production speed of reports. The Department should consult with the

CEB and Secretariat Task Forces on Knowledge Sharing in implementing the project.

C. Dedicated knowledge-sharing office

Recommendation 4

75. **The Secretary-General** should designate a dedicated unit for knowledge sharing in the Secretariat. The overall role of the Section should be to encourage, facilitate and guide knowledge sharing in the Secretariat and to ensure consistency, coordination and harmonization among Secretariat tools, activities and mechanisms. The Section should be provided with necessary resources for adequately fulfilling its new responsibilities. In collaboration with the Secretariat Task Force on Knowledge Sharing, as well as the Office of Human Resources Management and the Information Technology and Services Division, the Section should be tasked with:

- (a) Developing a common knowledge-sharing tool kit;
- (b) Providing guidance and support to knowledge networks;
- (c) Developing guidelines on knowledge sharing;
- (d) Developing a strategy for systematically gathering and utilizing the knowledge of staff leaving the United Nations, using protocols that are more systematic and effective than current methods;
- (e) Developing common tools and protocols for capturing and disseminating good practices and lessons learned;
- (f) Creating and maintaining a Secretariat knowledge-sharing website with guidance, tools, good practices and tips.

The Office of Internal Oversight Services notes that the location of this unit will be decided in the course of the ongoing reform resulting from the report of the Secretary-General on United Nations reform (A/60/692). The Office of Internal Oversight Services trusts that a decision on its location will not be delayed.

D. Human resource initiatives

Recommendation 5

76. **The Office of Human Resources Management** should make knowledge sharing a more explicit and stronger component of the performance appraisal system. It should identify the most relevant knowledge management competencies discussed in the *United Nations Profile of an Effective Manager* and incorporate them into performance appraisal systems for all staff. Knowledge sharing could be addressed more directly in human resource action plans, as well as in individual staff work plans and performance assessments.

Recommendation 6

77. **The Office of Human Resources Management** should address knowledge management more directly and explicitly as a topic in its staff development programme. That should include training in knowledge management concepts, mechanisms, tools and practices. A knowledge-sharing component should be specifically introduced into existing courses for leadership, management and organizational development, as well as into teamwork training programmes.

(Signed) Inga-Britt Ahlenius
Under-Secretary-General for Internal Oversight Services

Annex**Programmes/Departments surveyed by the Office of Internal Oversight Services**

Department of Economic and Social Affairs
Department for General Assembly and Conference Management
Department of Management
Department of Political Affairs
Department of Public Information
Department of Peacekeeping Operations
Economic Commission for Africa
Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean
Economic Commission for Europe
Economic Commission for Asia and the Pacific
Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia
International Trade Centre
Office of Humanitarian Affairs
Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States
Office of Human Resources Management
Office of Internal Oversight Services
Office of Legal Affairs
Office of Outer Space Affairs
Office of the Special Adviser on Africa
United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
United Nations Environment Programme
United Nations Human Settlements Programme
United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East



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Programme questions: evaluation

Report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services on the usefulness of the pilot thematic evaluation

Summary

As requested by the Committee for Programme and Coordination at its forty-third session, the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) is reporting on the usefulness of its pilot thematic evaluation entitled "Linkages between headquarters and field activities: a review of best practices for poverty eradication in the framework of the Millennium Declaration" (E/AC.51/2005/2), which was presented to the Committee at its forty-fifth session in 2005.

Feedback on the pilot thematic evaluation was positive, with both United Nations stakeholders and Member States rating its overall quality as excellent or good. High ratings were also given to the clarity and relevance of the report's findings, the adequacy of the evaluation methodology and the overall structure of the report. Stakeholders and Member States also saw the report as useful. Suggestions for improving the pilot thematic evaluation include stronger follow-up and accountability mechanisms, more targeted analyses and greater reference to the wider United Nations environment, including a discussion of the significance of coordination between Member States and United Nations entities. Regarding follow-up to report recommendations, OIOS noted that steps were being taken to enhance information sharing between field, regional and headquarters offices, to better inform country teams about the work of non-resident agencies, strengthen linkages between field offices and regional commissions and better inform country offices about the work of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs.

* E/AC.51/2006/1.



Lessons learned from the pilot thematic evaluation can be used to improve future reports. OIOS applied several of those lessons to its current thematic evaluation of knowledge management networks in pursuit of the goals of the Millennium Declaration. Among the most significant lessons learned were the need to scope and focus the evaluation appropriately, given resource and time constraints, and the importance of crafting recommendations that best address cross-cutting systemic issues and vulnerabilities. Informed by those lessons, in its current thematic evaluation OIOS focused on the most strategic and relevant issues, consulted with key stakeholders and tapped into relevant organizational initiatives and developed partnerships with coordinating bodies, such as the Chief Executives Board for Coordination. Interest in both the current evaluation and future thematic evaluations was particularly high.

Noting the positive feedback on the pilot thematic evaluation and its value as a cross-cutting and Organization-wide assessment of a timely, strategic and relevant topic, OIOS is of the view that thematic evaluations should continue to be conducted on a regular basis in the future.

I. Introduction

1. At its forty-third session, the Committee for Programme and Coordination decided to defer to its forty-fourth session the selection of a topic for thematic evaluation, for submission to the Committee at its forty-fifth session and subsequently to be reviewed for its usefulness at its forty-sixth session.¹ In 2004, the Committee selected the theme: "Linkages between headquarters and field activities: a review of best practices for poverty eradication in the framework of the Millennium Declaration".² In 2005, the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) presented its report on that topic (E/AC.51/2005/2) at the forty-fifth session of the Committee. The present report fulfils the request by the Committee to report back on the usefulness of the pilot thematic evaluation.

II. Methodology

2. Three methods were utilized for the present review: (a) a user feedback survey of the primary United Nations stakeholders of the pilot thematic evaluation;³ (b) a user feedback survey of Committee delegates to the forty-fifth session;⁴ and (c) systematic follow-up by OIOS on the evaluation recommendations. Feedback on the report was also obtained through a Secretariat-wide survey of programme managers conducted for the 2006 OIOS biennial report on strengthening the role of evaluation findings in programme design, delivery and policy directives. The review was conducted less than one year after the publication of the pilot thematic evaluation report; a longer time period would be required to conclusively determine the impact of the evaluation. Therefore, OIOS determined the usefulness of the pilot thematic evaluation by assessing user feedback, reviewing follow-up to recommendations and determining lessons learned that could be used to strengthen future thematic evaluation reports.

III. Background

3. The Regulations and Rules Governing Programme Planning, the Programme Aspects of the Budget, the Monitoring of Implementation and the Methods of Evaluation mandate OIOS to conduct evaluations to determine as systematically as possible the relevance, efficiency, effectiveness and impact of the Organization's activities in relation to their objectives.⁵ Historically, OIOS met that mandate by conducting in-depth evaluations of Secretariat programmes. However, in 2002,

¹ *Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-eighth Session, Supplement No. 16 (A/58/16)*, para. 16.

² *Ibid., Fifty-ninth Session, Supplement No. 16 (A/59/16)*, para. 399.

³ A user feedback survey was sent to the secretariat of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination, the United Nations Development Group Office, the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, the Regional Commissions New York Office, the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Children's Fund and a United Nations Country Team that OIOS visited during the pilot evaluation. Responses were received from seven individuals representing six different entities. These respondents will be referred to as "stakeholders" or "stakeholder respondents" in the present report.

⁴ Seven missions replied to the survey.

⁵ ST/SGB/2000/8, regulation 7.1.

OIOS proposed adding thematic evaluations to its programme of work. The evaluations focus on a single, cross-cutting topic or activity and assess the cumulative effects of multiple programmes sharing common goals. They also assess coordination and cooperation between programmes and take an organizational perspective on issues and topics of strategic relevance and importance. OIOS noted that thematic evaluations were therefore complementary to programme-specific in-depth evaluations by providing a cross-cutting assessment of the performance and impact of the Organization. At the forty-fourth session of the Committee in 2004, OIOS presented a report on the further development of topics for a pilot thematic evaluation, which proposed three different themes.⁶ The Committee noted that all three were important and had merit and ultimately selected the theme of linkages between headquarters and field activities: a review of best practices for poverty eradication in the framework of the Millennium Declaration.

IV. Findings

A. Feedback

Introduction of report to the Committee for Programme and Coordination

4. When the pilot thematic evaluation report was introduced to the Committee at its fifty-fifth session, it was welcomed as useful and timely and a good example of how a thematic approach to evaluation could be of value. Several delegations expressed concern, however, that the report did not adequately address the issue of coordination between Member States and United Nations agencies.⁷ With some provisions, the Committee endorsed all findings and recommendations contained in the report.

Overall quality

5. Both United Nations stakeholders and Member States rated the pilot thematic evaluation report highly. Five of seven stakeholder respondents rated the overall quality of the report as good, while two rated it as excellent. All seven Member States responding to the survey also rated the overall quality of the report as good. Positive feedback on the report was also reported by programme managers responding to the OIOS survey on strengthening the role of evaluation findings in programme design, delivery and policy directives.

6. Specific comments on the report illustrated its value added. The report was described by respondents as an excellent review of the realities of coordination in this area and a very good and rare institutional analysis of United Nations system-wide coherence. Others stated that the report was well-written, touched on relevant issues and was meaningful.

Evaluation findings and recommendations

7. Feedback on the findings and recommendations contained in the report was also positive. First, the clarity of both the findings and recommendations were rated

⁶ E/AC.51/2004/2, para. 18.

⁷ In response to that concern, OIOS acknowledged the importance of such coordination but clarified that such an assessment was beyond the scope of the evaluation.

as excellent by most stakeholder respondents (with a minority of respondents rating them as good), while nearly all rated the relevance of findings and recommendations as excellent or good.⁸ The adequacy of the evaluation methodology and the overall report structure similarly received high marks. From the perspective of Member States, the recommendations were seen as clear, relevant and practical.

8. OIOS noted that several comments received on the report pertained to general follow-up on its recommendations, but that the issues raised were not unique to the report alone. A few stakeholder respondents, while not disagreeing with the appropriateness and relevance of the recommendations, stated that without a more structured and clear process for follow-up, their impact would be limited. One stakeholder stated that what was needed were follow-up mechanisms with specific timelines and responsible parties, as well as benchmark assessments of progress made; another suggested an enhanced accountability framework for managers. Another stakeholder stated that the real challenge was that in the United Nations there were no adequate mechanisms to follow up on the myriad recommendations made by different bodies, many of which make eminent sense, but for which there was limited capacity for implementation.

Usefulness of evaluation

9. Regarding the utility of the report, six of seven stakeholders rated it as very useful or useful (one rated it as somewhat useful), while all seven Member States agreed that the report was useful to them. No stakeholders and only one Member State stated that additional information was needed in the report in order to address the mandate of its topic.⁹ However, a few stakeholders did offer ways in which the report could have been even more useful, such as greater follow-up and further exploration of certain key issues, in particular those raised in the triennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system.¹⁰

Suggestions for improvements

10. Stakeholders and Member States offered various suggestions for improving the pilot thematic evaluation report. They included introducing the report in senior management forums and working with entities to develop action plans for implementing the recommendations, using the report for dialogue with senior decision makers, providing more detailed and targeted analyses, expanding the discussion to include the wider environment in which the United Nations works and referring more to the role played by national Governments, including coordination between country teams and Governments, in poverty eradication.

Follow-up on the evaluation

11. Regarding follow-up to the recommendations contained in the report, OIOS will pursue standard procedure by following up with relevant clients every six months and reporting back to the Committee with a triennial review in 2008. While it must be noted that it is still quite early to assess implementation of the

⁸ One stakeholder respondent rated the relevance of major findings as fair.

⁹ The additional information requested related to the issue of coordination between United Nations entities and national Governments.

¹⁰ A/59/85-E/2004/68.

recommendations, in December 2005 and January 2006 OIOS did follow up with the relevant United Nations entities to determine the status of the evaluation recommendations.¹¹

12. The following steps were being taken to address the recommendations of the pilot thematic evaluation report:

(a) With regard to enhancing information-sharing (recommendation 2), the United Nations Development Group formed a knowledge management working group that was planning a pilot project on HIV/AIDS, and the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB) was taking the lead on developing a system-wide knowledge-sharing strategy. In addition, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) was working on expanding its human rights policy network to the United Nations system and helping Secretariat programmes to develop their own knowledge networks. Further, the UNDP poverty network has become part of a wider community of practice in order to better integrate it into the United Nations system;

(b) With regard to better informing country offices about the work of Secretariat entities with little or no country presence (recommendation 3a), the Group established an inter-agency working group on non-resident agencies, which would formulate recommendations for better engaging those agencies in the work of country teams and ensuring improved access by country teams to the expertise of agencies without a field presence. The Group was carrying out those tasks in close collaboration with the High-level Committee on Programmes of CEB, with a final report to be submitted by the working group by January 2006;

(c) Regarding further strengthening the resident coordinator system as a linkage tool (recommendation 9), the following initiatives were ongoing: the inter-agency working group on resident coordinator issues had prepared and generally agreed to an authority and accountability framework for resident coordinators; a special task force report on resident coordinator assessment, selection, support and training had been submitted to CEB; and joint training for resident coordinators and agency representatives would be piloted in October 2006;

(d) Regarding the better exchange of information between the regional commissions and country offices (recommendation 4), efforts were being made to incorporate the analytical and technical expertise of regional commissions at the country level through greater participation in country-level processes and frameworks, the provision of technical assistance and regional coordination meetings and knowledge-sharing forums. Also, the Regional Commission New York Office was co-chairing the above-mentioned working group on non-resident agencies;

(e) Concerning better informing country offices about the work of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs (recommendation 3b), the Department would further promote its work through local launches of its poverty-related publications and alert bulletins.

¹¹ The follow-up was conducted as part of the regular tracking of recommendations undertaken by OIOS on all of its reports on a biannual basis. Not all of the entities to whom the recommendations were addressed responded to a minimum of two OIOS requests for status updates.

B. Lessons learned

13. As discussed in the conference room paper on proposals for future thematic evaluations by the Office of Internal Oversight Services (E/AC.51/2005/CRP.1), several lessons had been learned from the pilot thematic evaluation. A significant challenge had been to scope and focus the evaluation appropriately, given the resources and time frame with which it was conducted. The lessons learned included:

- (a) Determining whether the evaluation would incorporate a broader, system-wide perspective, especially if warranted by the topic, and carrying it out within the limits of the OIOS mandate;
- (b) Employing a variety of evaluation methods;
- (c) Undertaking a stakeholder analysis to identify key stakeholders;
- (d) Engaging in a consultative process with those stakeholders;
- (e) Establishing an advisory group to provide guidance and feedback throughout the evaluation process;
- (f) Developing recommendations that addressed systemic weaknesses and fed into ongoing organizational initiatives.

14. OIOS noted that the cross-cutting and broad focus of thematic evaluations presented both the greatest opportunity and the greatest challenge in conducting the reviews. Determining the types of recommendations that could best address cross-cutting systemic issues and vulnerabilities, as well as deciding on the most appropriate entity to whom to address these recommendations, were significant challenges. OIOS recognized the importance of developing clients for thematic evaluations that would be in the best position to respond to and implement the systemic findings and conclusions (which were of relevance to multiple entities) of thematic evaluation reports.

15. United Nations stakeholders and Member States also offered suggestions for future thematic evaluations to make them more useful. They included making the reports more action-oriented, devising a stronger accountability framework for programme managers in responding to the reports, engaging in active consultation with departments to shape the scope of future evaluations and providing greater context in the reports with respect to the broader United Nations environment.

16. OIOS applied some of the lessons learned in its second thematic evaluation on knowledge management networks in pursuit of the goals of the Millennium Declaration. While the scope of the current evaluation was still relatively large, OIOS had focused on the issues of the greatest relevance and importance to the topic being reviewed and utilized a robust methodology incorporating both quantitative and qualitative methods. OIOS drew on relevant organizational initiatives and consulted with stakeholders throughout the evaluation in order to make the report more useful and relevant. During the evaluation, OIOS regularly consulted with staff from the Dag Hammarskjöld Library leading the secretariat knowledge sharing task force. OIOS also consulted with CEB, particularly in anticipation of the formation of a working group that would be assigned the task of developing a system-wide knowledge management strategy and framework (the OIOS evaluation was referenced in the terms of reference for this group as

providing a foundation for its work). Lastly, OIOS will also attempt to have the report discussed at forums of senior managers, as suggested by one stakeholder.

C. Interest in thematic evaluations

17. The interest of programme managers in the current thematic evaluation of knowledge management networks in pursuit of the goals of the Millennium Declaration is very high, given the timeliness and relevance of the topic discussed and the ability of OIOS, with its central evaluation function, to provide a Secretariat-wide and cross-cutting assessment of the topic. Many programmes are beginning to focus more attention on knowledge management and therefore have expressed great interest in the findings and recommendations contained in the report. OIOS noted that, given the nature and focus of the current thematic evaluation topic, a programme-specific in-depth evaluation could not have provided the comprehensive and Secretariat-wide assessment needed to determine how to strengthen the Organization as a knowledge-based and knowledge-sharing institution.

18. Overall, feedback regarding the future of thematic evaluations was very positive, with widespread support for OIOS continuing to conduct them. Responses from stakeholders and Member States on the user feedback survey indicated general support for thematic evaluations. Further, in responses to the OIOS Secretariat-wide survey for its biennial report on strengthening the role of evaluation findings in programme design, delivery and policy directives, respondents from nearly all programmes stated that OIOS should continue to conduct thematic evaluations in the future.

V. Conclusion

19. OIOS believes that the pilot thematic evaluation on the theme of "Linkages between headquarters and field activities: a review of best practices for poverty eradication in the framework of the Millennium Declaration" was successful in providing a sound and useful system-wide assessment of an issue of relevance and significance to the United Nations. Feedback on the evaluation was positive, with emphasis on its high quality, timeliness, unique focus on systemic issues and valuable institutional analysis of organizational coherence. While OIOS acknowledges the limitations to the report, it notes that no other evaluation office in the United Nations Secretariat is positioned to undertake an evaluation of such a cross-cutting nature. Assessments of coordination and harmonization are an integral part of an evaluation work plan that provides valid and reliable information to meet the needs of Member States and programme managers for objective and reliable evaluation evidence in strategic decision-making and programme enhancement. OIOS concludes that the experience of the pilot thematic evaluation was sufficiently positive to warrant the regular conduct of thematic evaluations in the future.

(Signed) Inga-Britt Ahlenius
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Programme questions: evaluation

**Report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services
on an in-depth evaluation of political affairs*****Summary*

As decided by the Committee for Programme and Coordination at its forty-fourth session, the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) undertook an in-depth evaluation of political affairs. Owing to the large scope of the subprogrammes of the Department of Political Affairs, it was not feasible to complete a comprehensive in-depth evaluation of the Department in its entirety. OIOS is conducting the evaluation in a phased manner. The present report reviews subprogramme 1 of programme 1 (Political affairs) of the medium-term plan for the period 2002-2005 and primarily the work of the regional divisions in conflict prevention, peacemaking and peacebuilding.

Over the past decade, the total number of armed conflicts has declined. By one measure, the number of major armed conflicts dropped from 33 in 1991 to 19 in 2004. While observers have attributed this decline in part to an "extraordinary upsurge in activism by the international community" led by the United Nations, the specific effects of United Nations actions are difficult to determine. Furthermore, the predominance of internal conflict makes every element of subprogramme 1 harder to implement. Overall, the implementation record of the Department of Political Affairs is considered mixed, and highlights the importance of working with regional partners, an area where there are important signs of progress.

* E/AC.51/2006/1.

** The delay in submission was caused by the time taken to evaluate and incorporate the comments received from the relevant stakeholders on the findings and recommendations contained in the report.



The management and staff of the regional divisions demonstrate commitment and initiative, but have a complex and expanding set of work obligations and too few resources to meet them. Some inappropriate organizational structures and work processes further hamper their quality and timely delivery.

OIOS concludes that the regional divisions need substantial additional resources, and management, organizational and work process changes. The Office makes 10 recommendations to enhance the work of the regional divisions, including: clarification of their vision and role as focal point for conflict prevention, peacemaking and peacebuilding; strengthened institutional mechanisms for inter-agency communication and collaboration; and a mandated comprehensive change management process, intended to lead to restructured, renewed, and adequately resourced regional divisions.

Contents

	<i>Paragraphs</i>	<i>Page</i>
I. Introduction: mandate, scope and purpose	1-3	4
II. Methodology	4-5	4
III. Background	6	5
IV. Evaluation findings	7-70	5
A. Contemporary conflicts and the need for better coordination and stronger partnerships to address them	7-34	5
B. Organizational and resource constraints on the quality of work	35-48	11
C. Managing for quality and other key issues to be addressed	49-70	16
V. Conclusions	71-73	21
VI. Recommendations	74-83	21

I. Introduction: mandate, scope and purpose

1. At its forty-fourth session, the Committee for Programme and Coordination (CPC) requested the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) to undertake an in-depth evaluation of political affairs, to be submitted to the Committee at its forty-sixth session.¹ The report has been reviewed by the relevant departments and their comments appear in italics as appropriate.

2. The political affairs programme is divided into five distinct subprogrammes and is implemented by eight divisions/units with the support of the management, policy, planning and other support units, as well as 41 special political missions, of which nine are administered by the Department of Political Affairs.² Owing to the large scope of its subprogrammes and support activities, it was not feasible to complete a comprehensive in-depth evaluation of the Department in its entirety. The evaluation is to be conducted in a phased manner. The present report covers only subprogramme 1, Prevention, control and resolution of conflicts, of programme 1 (Political affairs) of the medium-term plan for the period 2002-2005. The other subprogrammes will be evaluated and the reports submitted to the Committee at its forty-seventh session.

3. The purpose of this in-depth evaluation is to determine the relevance, efficiency, effectiveness and impact of the activities of the Department of Political Affairs in relation to its objectives under subprogramme 1.

II. Methodology

4. OIOS utilized the following five evaluation methods: (a) a self-administered survey of all regional division desk officers;³ (b) self-administered surveys of non-random samples of 18 regional organizations, five regional commissions and 28 Special Representatives of the Secretary-General;⁴ (c) 117 interviews with management and staff of the Department of Political Affairs (42), Secretariat departments and partners (55), and the primary clients of the Department's support, in particular the Executive Office of the Secretary-General (12), Special Representatives of the Secretary-General (4), as well as external partner institutions (4); (d) an analysis of programme data in the Integrated Monitoring and Documentation Information System (IMDIS) and the Electronic Performance Appraisal System (e-PAS); and (e) a desk review of relevant documents, including previous internal and external assessments.

5. OIOS recognizes that the evaluation methodology has limitations. First, the evaluation focuses only on key activities of the regional divisions of the Department of Political Affairs in conflict prevention, peacemaking or peacebuilding. Second, it does not evaluate the work of the Secretary-General and his representatives, who are

¹ *Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-ninth Session, Supplement No. 16 (A/59/16)*, para. 382.

² Other special political missions are administered by the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, the Department for Disarmament Affairs, the Counter-Terrorism Committee and the Department of Management.

³ The response rate was 32 per cent.

⁴ Response rates were 50 per cent, 100 per cent and 25 per cent, respectively.

the primary United Nations actors in preventive diplomacy and peacemaking, nor does it review the comparable work of other United Nations partners.

III. Background

6. The objective under subprogramme 1 of the Department of Political Affairs is to assist in the prevention, control and resolution of conflicts through peaceful means as well as to promote a more cohesive and integrated response by the United Nations system in addressing post-conflict peacebuilding challenges faced by countries emerging from crisis. This subprogramme is primarily implemented with support from the four regional divisions of the Department, namely: Africa I, Africa II, Asia and the Pacific, and the Americas and Europe Divisions.

IV. Evaluation findings

A. Contemporary conflicts and the need for better coordination and stronger partnerships to address them

1. There are positive trends in conflict prevention and peacemaking, but the nature of contemporary conflicts, with the predominance of intra-State and transnational conflicts, poses challenges to the effectiveness of the United Nations.

7. Over the past decade, the number of armed conflicts has declined substantially from its peak magnitude in the early 1990s.⁵ Recent reports have attributed this decline in part to an "extraordinary upsurge in activism by the international community", led by the United Nations.⁶ This is in reference to the increase in the number of United Nations preventive diplomacy missions and United Nations peacemaking activities. United Nations preventive actions, it is argued, helped to prevent a number of conflicts while more intense peacemaking promoted an increase in negotiated peace accords. However, despite the decline in conflicts, there is no indication that the trend will continue without continued preventive actions; and furthermore, some experts are concerned that ongoing contemporary conflicts are increasingly targeted at civilians and may have greater societal destruction.

8. The United Nations has been more successful in addressing inter-State conflicts through the good offices and preventive diplomacy actions of the Secretary-General and his representatives, but these have been less successful in addressing intra-State conflicts.⁷ Host governments are often reluctant to negotiate with armed opposition forces, or to allow mediators to have access to them, as this is seen to bestow political status, credibility, and/or political legitimacy on the opposition. Such constraints are not unique to United Nations mediation, however,

⁵ The Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) data indicated a decline from 33 major armed conflicts in 1991 to 19 in 2004, *SIPRI Yearbook 2005*.

⁶ *Human Security Report 2005* (Oxford University Press for the Human Security Centre, University of British Columbia.), pp. 23-25, 153-155.

⁷ Barnett R. Rubin, *Prevention of Violent Conflict: Tasks and Challenges for the United Nations* (2005).

and the record of the past 15 years shows a number of instances where United Nations mediators have been successful.

9. Effective Department of Political Affairs support for such operational prevention activities⁸ in the context of internal conflict (ongoing or impending) requires, however, much more in-depth and field-derived levels of knowledge than are currently available in the regional divisions. Significant strengthening and retooling of the regional divisions is needed, both to deepen their information and analytical capability and to develop and broaden their substantive connections to the rest of the United Nations system.

2. **There is limited success in structural prevention and peacebuilding.**

10. The United Nations approach to structural or multidimensional prevention⁹ focuses on inter-agency cooperation, coordinated through various inter-agency mechanisms, including: the Executive Committee for Peace and Security at the policy level; the Interdepartmental Framework for Coordination on Early Warning and Preventive Action (known as the Framework Team) at the working level in Headquarters; and the Integrated Mission Task Forces, the Common Country Assessments and United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks in the field.

11. A study commissioned by the Department of Political Affairs found little collaboration among United Nations efforts at long-term or "structural" conflict prevention. It concluded that, "[w]ithout stronger cooperation with the international financial institutions (IFIs) or bilateral donors, the ability of the United Nations to wield influence through structural prevention tools or to use aid as an incentive is limited".¹⁰

12. Peacebuilding also requires a programmatic approach, but with emphasis on post-conflict restoration or transformation of governing institutions and legal regimes. Another study commissioned by the Department of Political Affairs concluded that post-conflict countries with United Nations field missions were no less likely to relapse into conflict than were countries without such missions.¹¹ On the other hand, because United Nations missions tend to be sent where peace may be toughest to build, had they not deployed, the relapse rate for those cases might have been even higher.

13. New and promising initiatives for cooperation are the Transitional Results Matrix, piloted in five countries by the United Nations Development Group and the World Bank, with extensive participation of other international financial institutions and donors, and the joint United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)-Department of Political Affairs programme on Building National Capacities for Conflict Prevention, currently implemented in seven countries, focusing on developing the capacities, skills and processes that national actors need in order to

⁸ Operational prevention includes early warning, preventive diplomacy and/or deployments of monitors.

⁹ Structural prevention is longer term and works to build institutions of capable and responsive governance that address the root causes of conflict.

¹⁰ Rubin, *op.cit.*

¹¹ Out of 27 United Nations missions established in post-conflict situations, armed conflicts resumed in 13 cases. See Charles Call, "Institutionalizing Peace: A review of post-conflict peacebuilding concepts and issues", a policy review for the Department of Political Affairs (2005).

jointly own, constructively engage on, and find common solutions to divisive national issues or critical policy questions. Although the results from these initiatives are still pending, the indicative outcomes are positive.

3. **The ability of the regional divisions to give guidance and to promote a cohesive and integrated United Nations system response in conflict prevention and peacebuilding is hampered by the lack of conceptual clarity.**

14. Responsibility for elements of prevention and peacebuilding is assigned to several United Nations entities. The regional divisions of the Department of Political Affairs are responsible for giving guidance to other United Nations programmes, funds and agencies in conflict prevention, and for promoting a more cohesive and integrated response by the United Nations system in addressing post-conflict peacebuilding challenges.¹²

15. A recent workshop involving various United Nations partners found that "[t]here is frequently no consensus among United Nations agencies on what conflict prevention practically means on the ground, nor on how it differs in policy and operational terms from 'normal' development interventions that aim to address vulnerability, exclusion, and participation (for instance)."¹³ Such ambiguity has been the source of some tension between United Nations agencies; it has resulted in limited acceptance of the Department of Political Affairs and the regional divisions by the rest of the Organization as focal point and a source of guidance. It also makes a clear inter-agency division of labour in the field harder to craft and sustain, and it has hindered the development of a cohesive system-wide approach to conflict prevention.

16. In previous assessments by OIOS (1999) and the Department of Political Affairs (2002), regional division staff expressed concern about the lack of an operational post-conflict peacebuilding strategy and a common vision, insufficient policy guidance from managers, and a need to better integrate preventive diplomacy and peacebuilding concepts into their routine work programme. In 2004, those issues remained unresolved.¹⁴

17. At the Headquarters level, the Executive Committee for Peace and Security, convened by the Department of Political Affairs, was originally intended to provide system-wide policy development and coordination on preventive action. A 2002 review concluded that its potential as the principal advisory body remained under-utilized.¹⁵ Interviews conducted during this evaluation reaffirmed that finding. OIOS noted that the Committee faces a particular difficulty in functioning as a decision-making body because policy decisions related to conflict issues require the participation of the Executive Office of the Secretary-General, which is rare. The challenge of developing a comprehensive system for conflict prevention has now been taken up by the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for

¹² Objectives of the Department of Political Affairs subprogramme 1 as stated in the proposed medium-term plan for the period 2002-2005 (A/55/6 (Prog. 1)), para. 1.4.

¹³ Report of the "Lessons Learned Workshop: Integrating conflict sensitivity into United Nations planning and programming", (2005).

¹⁴ Report of the Department of Political Affairs Change Management Team — "Working Group on Substantive Issues and Policy Planning" (2004).

¹⁵ "The Executive Committee for Peace and Security — Review of its effectiveness and recommendations for reform" (May 2002).

Coordination (CEB), in close collaboration with the Department of Political Affairs,¹⁶ while policy decisions relating to conflict situations are now taken up by the Policy Committee.¹⁷

18. With respect to system-wide coordination in peacebuilding, a "serious gap" has been highlighted in the strategic realm for post-conflict peacebuilding in that "[n]o single office brings together the various strands of the United Nations system at Headquarters".¹⁸ To fill this gap, the Peacebuilding Commission has been established, with a Peacebuilding Support Office based within the Secretariat. The creation of this new office implies a dilution, if not a transfer, of the role of the Department of Political Affairs as the Organization's focal point for peacebuilding.¹⁹

4. The regional divisions have made good efforts to strengthen their relationships with other United Nations entities but most of these relationships remain fragile and are not institutionalized.

(a) There is a lack of reciprocity in the flow of information between the regional divisions and their partners.

19. The processes by which the Department of Political Affairs shares information with other departments, and how information from various partners is shared throughout the United Nations system, shape the quality of information and analytical products eventually provided to the Secretary-General.

20. OIOS noted that information-sharing mechanisms are not well structured and the flow of information is often not reciprocal. Many partners have indicated that while they give information to the Executive Office of the Secretary-General, through the Department of Political Affairs, they receive little information in return. Some pointed to a weak consultation process on reports, and a failure to receive reports from the Department on relevant meetings at Headquarters. Partners also noted that draft reports for the Security Council are either not submitted to them for review or are submitted with insufficient time for meaningful review.

(b) Partnerships have not been institutionalized, posing risks to their long-term durability.

21. The regional divisions of the Department of Political Affairs have regular working interactions with various departments and agencies. Partnerships are forged primarily to exchange information, coordinate activities and leverage resources, with some joint activities. They cover a wide range of issues such as development and poverty eradication, human rights and the rule of law, elections and the building of democratic institutions, and the control of small arms.

22. The regional divisions participate in various joint programming and assessment exercises, including interdepartmental working groups and

¹⁶ See Conclusions of the Chief Executives Board for Coordination at its first regular session of 2005 (CEB/2005/1).

¹⁷ The Policy Committee was created by the Secretary-General for strengthening executive management of the United Nations Secretariat (Note to Staff issued on 6 May 2005).

¹⁸ Call, *op. cit.*

¹⁹ The Secretary-General's note on the Peacebuilding Support Office makes no mention of the role of the Department of Political Affairs and its division of labour.

multidisciplinary reviews. They have played a critical role in providing timely political guidance to the United Nations Country Teams and were instrumental in driving system-wide commitment to conflict prevention. A promising recent initiative was the joint sponsorship with UNDP of "peace and development advisers" to resident coordinators, though only to a few countries.

23. However, many of the partnerships remain informal and in some cases are very weak. While interviews indicate that many desk officers have good working relationships with the United Nations Country Teams, for others their relationship is "virtually non-existent". Partners in turn note that Department of Political Affairs desk officers are often absent when face-to-face interactions with national actors are crucial. With limited access to local and regional information networks, and limited resources for missions to the field, the regional divisions are constrained in developing and sustaining sound institutional partnerships.

24. OIOS noted that the lack of a formal structure and guidelines for those relationships undermined mutual accountability and limited the potential for meaningful long-term cooperation. Such relationships can easily dissolve with changes of personnel.

(c) The working relationships and operational arrangements with the Department of Peacekeeping Operations have improved but have yet to be fully institutionalized.

25. Although working relationships and operational arrangements between the Department of Political Affairs and the Department of Peacekeeping Operations have improved, OIOS noted that they have yet to be fully institutionalized. The only formal articulation of their working relationship is contained in paragraphs 126 and 127 of the report of the Secretary-General entitled "Strengthening of the United Nations: an agenda for further change" (A/57/387), which have not been formalized into operational guidelines. The Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions has stressed "the urgent need to revisit the issue of coordination and cooperation between the two departments to ensure complementarity and avoid potential duplication and overlap and to consider a possible redistribution of resources",²⁰ reiterating its concerns raised during the previous two years (see A/59/784, para. 36, and A/58/7,²¹ para. II.9).

26. Senior staff of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the Department of Political Affairs interviewed by OIOS preferred open and flexible processes, arguing that formal structures and explicit guidelines should be minimized. OIOS is concerned that this preference for informality tends to undermine sustained cooperation and contributes to problems of inconsistencies in information-sharing and other exchanges between staff members, lack of clarity of mission support roles, and a continuing lack of guidance on such critical processes as handover of responsibility for missions as host countries enter different phases of conflict-peace transitions.

27. Furthermore, the experience of the Department of Political Affairs regional divisions regarding integrated missions has been highly dependent on personal

²⁰ *Official Records of the General Assembly, Sixtieth Session, Supplement No. 7 (A/60/7)*, para. II.7.

²¹ *Ibid.*, *Fifty-eighth Session, Supplement No. 7*.

relationships. Although the relationship with the Department of Peacekeeping Operations is improving, Department of Political Affairs desk officers continue to express frustrations. This reliance on ad hoc initiatives and personalities is problematic from a systemic point of view.

28. As the current arrangements continue to cause frustration, and the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions remains unsatisfied despite annual efforts to explain how the departments divide their responsibilities, it is perhaps time to explore alternatives for formal institutional arrangements, including a more sharply defined division of labour, that would meet the needs of both departments.

(d) The working relationship with regional commissions is not well established.

29. OIOS noted that regional commissions have occasionally tried to engage the Department of Political Affairs on certain issues of mutual interest. However, no systematic arrangements have materialized, so far, for establishing cooperation on a regular basis. The regional commissions rarely have occasion or opportunity to provide inputs for the reports prepared by the Department, including those relating to the cooperation between the United Nations and the regional/subregional groupings.

30. There is a need for more systematic and substantive cooperation between the Department of Political Affairs and the regional commissions, especially in supporting post-conflict peacebuilding work. More cooperation is also needed in preparation for and participation at the high-level meeting of the Secretary-General with regional organizations. Furthermore, the regional commissions requested that Department of Political Affairs missions, Special Representatives of the Secretary-General and Special Envoys contact them during their visits to the respective regions to exchange information and perspectives.

5. There is growing cooperation with regional organizations, but many of the agreed-upon modalities for better cooperation are yet to be implemented.

31. Towards the goal of maintaining international peace and security, the Department of Political Affairs and its regional divisions are mandated to provide support for cooperation with organizations within and outside the United Nations system, particularly with the secretariats of regional organizations, based on Chapter VIII of the Charter of the United Nations. OIOS surveys indicated that this work is greatly appreciated.

32. The Department of Political Affairs convenes the biennial high-level consultations between the United Nations and regional organizations on regional-global mechanisms of peace and security. Arising from those consultations were 13 modalities for cooperation²² and a framework for cooperation with guiding principles and possible cooperative activities.

33. OIOS observed that the regional divisions have been active in using four of the 13 modalities for cooperation, namely, coordination and consultation (modality 1), better flows of information through systematic mechanisms (modality 2), visits of staff at working levels (modality 5), and arranging joint expert meetings (modality 7),

²² Adopted at the third high-level meeting between the Secretary-General of the United Nations and heads of regional and other inter-governmental organizations.

including regional workshops and regular staff-level meetings and exchanges of information. On the whole, the regional organizations surveyed by OIOS were very positive about the responsiveness and openness of the relevant regional divisions to maintain and develop cooperation.

34. Nevertheless, the regional organizations would welcome more support from the regional divisions relating to the remaining modalities, for which there is either little follow-up or weak implementation. Specifically, the regional organizations would welcome regular management and staff-level dialogues and consultative meetings, better coordination among United Nations agencies at national and regional levels, better understanding of the regions by the Department of Political Affairs, better exchange of information (including political analyses), and more joint activities, including joint funding efforts, training programmes and staff exchanges.

B. Organizational and resource constraints on the quality of work

35. OIOS has identified two primary constraints hampering the quality of work of the regional divisions, which in turn, impact on various management, work process and staff issues.

1. The current organizational structure of the two mega-divisions covers geographic regions that are too large and disparate, resulting in inadequate attention to substantive and management issues.

36. Based on an analysis of conflict statistics and findings from the Center for International Development and Conflict Management²³ presented in table 1 below, OIOS believes that the splitting of the African region into two divisions is warranted given the high number of conflicts. In the mega-divisions of Asia and the Pacific and Americas and Europe, both management and staff have stated that placing disparate regional components under a single division is "artificial" given their geopolitical differences, and that the current structure undermines focus on emerging conflict situations. The sheer size of the combined regions and the number of countries reduce the degree of attention that subregions and countries at risk deserve. Few or no economies of scale result from the current arrangement, since substantive analysis and monitoring have to be done at the country-specific level, with each warranting differentiated managerial attention.

37. In addition, because so much effort is required for substantive support to the Executive Office of the Secretary-General, through no fault of the managers who correctly prioritize response to emerging crises, management and operational issues are often given secondary consideration, to the detriment of internal systems and staff concerns. Staff indicated that the current structure negatively affected the management of staff.

38. OIOS found that the current divisional structure creates undue pressure on the management of the mega-divisions and also results in inadequate attention to both substantive and management issues.

²³ Monty G. Marshall and Ted Robert Gurr, *Peace and Conflict 2005: A Global Survey of Armed Conflicts, Self-Determination Movements, and Democracy*, Center for International Development and Conflict Management, University of Maryland, College Park (2005).

2. **Staff and resource allocations are not commensurate with broad and expanding mandates and demands.**

(a) **Apparent under-coverage of potential conflict situations; some special political missions receive less than the desired amount of substantive support.**

39. The regional divisions, as service centres, have highly variable, yet time-critical, demands for their services. Table 1 reflects the geographical areas and number of armed conflicts covered by the regional divisions, and allows for a partial assessment of the regional divisions' workload.²⁴

Table 1
Countries, conflicts and special political missions coverage by regional divisions

	<i>Africa I Division</i>	<i>Africa II Division</i>	<i>Asia and the Pacific Division</i>	<i>Americas and Europe Division</i>	<i>Total</i>
a. Managers (Director and deputies)	2	2	3	3	10
b. Regular budget desk officers	9	10	13	10	42
c. Extrabudgetary personnel	0	2	4	4	10
d. General Service	5	6	7	7	25
Countries					
e. Number of countries covered	27	30	57	92	206
f. Ratio of countries to managers	13.5 : 1	15 : 1	19 : 1	30.7 : 1	20.6 : 1
g. Ratio of countries to desk officers	3 : 1	3 : 1	4 : 1	9 : 1	5 : 1
Conflicts					
h. Number of major armed conflicts	4	2	5	3	14
i. Number of "minor" armed conflicts	4	5	9	1	19
j. Number of countries with critically low peacebuilding capacity	11	14	16	9	50
k. Total countries requiring attention*	19	21	30	13	83
l. Ratio of countries requiring attention to desk officers	2.1 : 1	2.1 : 1	2.3 : 1	1.3 : 1	2.0 : 1
m. Regional division "focus countries"***	8	6	8	13	35
n. Current "focus countries" as a percentage of countries requiring attention	42%	29%	27%	100%	42%
Special political missions					
o. Number of special political missions supported (2004)	4	6	13	7	30

* Marshall and Gurr, *Peace and Conflict 2005*.

** These are the number of "focus countries" reported in the Department of Political Affairs' Integrated Monitoring And Documentation Information System (IMDIS) report for the biennium 2004-2005.

²⁴ This does not include, for example, support to regional organizations and does not include countries in the Americas and Europe Division that are involved in conflicts in other regions.

40. The average number of countries covered per desk officer is five. Although, at some point, quantity imposes burdens of its own, a better measure of workload would be the number of conflicts and countries at risk of conflict in a given region. If one compares the number of "focus countries" of each division (line m) to the number of "countries requiring attention" (line k), there appears to be under-coverage (line n), except in the case of the Americas and Europe Division; the rest, on average, are able to focus on fewer than half of the countries that should be receiving attention.

41. Table 2 shows the increase in special political missions since the end of the 1990s. Currently, the Department of Political Affairs is responsible for the administration of only 9 of the 41 political missions, but the regional divisions are called upon to provide political advice, guidance and support for 30 of them.²⁵ OIOS has found that some special political missions receive less than the desired amount of substantive support and attention from the regional divisions.

Table 2
Growth in special political missions, 1998-2005

<i>Biennium</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>Budgeted resources (millions of United States dollars)</i>
1998-1999	23	101.3
2000-2001	41	109.8
2002-2003	40	204.6*
2004-2005	41	475.7** (as at June 2005)

* Reflects the deployment of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) and the partial deployment of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI).

** Reflects full deployment of UNAMI.

Source: *Official Records of the General Assembly, Sixtieth Session, Supplement No. 7 (A/60/7)*, table VIII.1.

(b) The desk officers do not have adequate time for monitoring, research and analytical work.

42. Table 3 provides a breakdown of the average total time allocation, by tasks, of the regional divisions' desk officers. Just over half of the average desk officer's time is spent on tasks other than research and writing. Though analytical papers should require more time, OIOS found that desk officers can only devote less than 16 per cent of their total writing time to them. Less than 20 per cent is devoted to monitoring and research activities that build and update the knowledge base that in turn supports all of the other substantive work. That percentage translates into roughly 90 minutes daily or, divided over the five countries in the average desk officer's portfolio, 18 minutes per country per day. One may indeed be concerned about how much quality information and analysis a desk officer can absorb with no more time than that to study critical cases daily.

²⁵ From the Department of Political Affairs' submission to the Policy Committee: "Strengthening the Secretary-General's good offices and mediation capacity" (14 October 2005).

43. This analysis does not take fully into consideration the sizeable portion of the desk officers' work devoted to the routine work of low-key diplomacy and networking that is necessary for long-term productive engagement. Considered against the overall workload, the inconsistent quality of information and analytical products is better understood. OIOS is of the view that there is a real under-resourcing of the regional divisions. The current staff complement allows merely adequate production of the current level of quantitative outputs, without the desired, and necessary, qualitative improvement.

44. OIOS also observed a need for greater clarity in the delineation of conflict-related work and support to the Secretary-General for all "political aspects" of relations with Member States and others. OIOS recognized that there is no easy solution to it. On the one hand, conflict-related matters clearly require the full attention of those officers assigned to them. On the other hand, the Secretary-General has a global political role that requires "foreign ministry" support. The rational solution would be to create two differently focused sections within the regional divisions, but that would entail a significant increase of staff resources with differentiated skill sets, to adequately cover all conflicts (real and potential) as well as maintain the required global political support to the Secretary-General.

Table 3

Quantified outputs of regional divisions* (Average for 2004 and 2005) and average time allocation of desk officers of regional divisions**

<i>Outputs</i>	<i>Africa I</i>	<i>Africa II</i>	<i>Asia-Pacific*</i>	<i>Americas-Europe</i>	<i>Tasks</i>	<i>Percentage of time on task**</i>
General Assembly reports	2	1	9	3		
General Assembly inputs	0	5	1	0		
Security Council reports	9	9	10	8		
Security Council inputs	0	0	2	1		
Briefing notes	111	43	138	120	Writing	29
Analytical papers	78	105	154	110		
Notes of meetings	80	138	242	228		
Talking points	184	167	330	177		
Profiles	18	50	61	68		
Official correspondence	287	459	808	178		
Participation in substantive meetings	103	164	226	230	Meetings	17
					Monitoring and research	19
					Management support	9
					Support to special political missions***	19
					Training	3
					Other tasks	4

* Outputs are average total outputs for 2004 and 2005 as reported by regional divisions. Asia and the Pacific outputs are only for 2005, as 2004 outputs were not available.

** Time allocation estimate based on survey and structured interviews of desk officers.

*** Africa I supports 4 special political missions; Africa II supports 6; Asia and the Pacific, 13; and Americas and Europe, 7.

45. OIOS is not in a position to specify the number of additional staff required. It noted the recent request of the Department of Political Affairs for 13 additional new posts for the regional divisions.²⁶ However, OIOS was informed that the assessment was done without an analytical framework and that it does not reflect the actual staff requirements of the divisions.

(c) The lack of access to timely and detailed information undercuts the divisions' ability to meet their early warning mandate.

46. Effective operational conflict prevention requires adequate warning time. Without a strong field presence, and without adequate resources, the regional divisions cannot follow unfolding events around the world in equivalent detail and timeliness. In order to set their priorities for monitoring and generation of timely analyses and policy options for the Secretary-General, the regional divisions rely on numerous sources of information to support their early warning and response work. These include information provided by Member States, regional and subregional organizations, the United Nations system (i.e., the Framework Team) and various external sources, including competent non-governmental entities and open and subscription-based sources.²⁷ OIOS noted the general opinion that what is presently doable under current resources is suboptimal for early warning.

(d) The trust funds developed to support subprogramme I have been well utilized and are depleted.

47. Two trust funds have been established to support the regional divisions in conflict prevention. Table 4 below shows the allocation by region and for thematic support. In total, 107 discrete activities have been supported. OIOS noted with concern that there has been no evaluation of these activities. Without closer study of the specific activities, OIOS is not in a position to assess their contribution to the mandates. However, OIOS noted that the availability of the trust fund support is, and has been, vital for the Department's ability to follow up on urgent prevention tasks and support of high-level, important prevention initiatives. The funds provide critical support for the mandated work of the regional divisions that are not covered by the regular budget. The Department of Political Affairs has no separate fund-raising or management staff for these trust funds. These tasks have been absorbed by the already overstretched Policy Planning Unit (PPU) located in the Office of the Under-Secretary-General. Both trust funds are currently depleted, without any clear indication of their replenishment.

²⁶ Submission to the Policy Committee: "Strengthening the Secretary-General's good offices and mediation capacity", annex I. [The Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions recommended approval of only 6 of 15 staff requested, for the time being (A/60/7/Add.13, para. 33).]

²⁷ See, for example, the weekly CrisisWatch maintained by the International Crisis Group, online at www.crisisgroup.org/home/.

Table 4
Trust fund allocations by region*

Regions	Africa I and II	Asia-Pacific	Americas- Europe	Thematic	Total
<i>Trust funds</i>					
<i>(millions of US dollars)</i>					
Trust Fund for Preventive Action	5.1	2.8	1.7	1.8	11.4
Trust Fund for Special Political Missions and Other Activities	11.2	1.2	0.8	9.5	22.7
Total	16.3	4.0	2.5	11.3	34.1
Percentage allocation	48	12	7	33	100

* Figures are as of March 2005.

48. OIOS believes that a root cause of the mixed quality of work is the misalignment between resources and mandates, and the resultant heavy workload. Although there are certain management and technological initiatives that can be undertaken using current resources to address some of the problematic areas of work, there is a limit as to what such initiatives could achieve. In the opinion of OIOS, increased resources would be necessary to more effectively meet the broad mandates given to the regional divisions. Alternatively, mandates and functions may have to be clarified and limited, or reduced.

C. Managing for quality and other key issues to be addressed

49. It should be made clear that adding staff is a necessary but insufficient measure to ensure effective fulfilment of the regional divisions' mandates. For a transformation in qualitative terms, they require also the right competencies and additional resources to support the acquisition of field knowledge and strengthening of their analytical capability.

1. The regional divisions do not reliably produce quality products.

(a) The quality of information and analytical products is mixed.

50. The effectiveness of the Secretary-General, his representatives and senior officials in prevention, peacemaking and peacebuilding depends, to some extent, on the quality, accuracy, timeliness and usefulness of the analytical and information services provided by the regional divisions of the Department of Political Affairs.

51. While there is unanimous, strong appreciation for the hard work and dedication of the staff in the regional divisions, the quality of their output is best described as "mixed", ranging from very good to very poor.

52. Given that these analytical and informational products are country or conflict-situation specific, OIOS notes with concern that any instances of poor analysis or information could adversely affect the ability of the Organization to respond appropriately.

53. OIOS observed the following perceptions of persisting weaknesses:

(a) The regional divisions cannot access the up-to-date and in-depth information needed to effectively identify and warn on potential conflicts.

(b) Senior officials strongly expressed a need for more strategic analysis with forward-looking positions clearly articulated.

(c) Political guidance is often short-term focused but also needs to address mid- to long-term scenarios.

(d) Analytical products tend to be narrowly politically focused, lacking the breadth of perspective needed to support decision-making in complex conflict situations.

(e) Special Representatives of the Secretary-General and Special Envoys need more information and guidance on lessons learned and best practices in conflict prevention measures.

(f) The quality of writing in documents of the Department of Political Affairs is uneven.

(b) There is little method to collecting information and conducting analysis, and there is no proper induction and handing over of portfolios.

54. The regional divisions' capacity to collect information is limited and there is no standard protocol for the collection of information: no checklist of recommended sources, and little guidance on the selection or analysis of sources. Each desk officer develops his or her own methodology. The lack of access to information is sometimes mitigated by the field experience of the officers. However, only 8 of 19 full-time desk officers had any previous field experience.²⁸ Moreover, OIOS observed that there is no formal process or methodology for monitoring a country, nor for conflict or political analysis that ensures systematic consideration of agreed key factors. There are a few online manuals available, some of which have sound methodological approaches.²⁹ However, without adaptation, they are not geared to support the work of desk officers. In any case, OIOS found that the majority of desk officers either were not aware of them or did not use them.

55. OIOS noted that, upon joining their division, many desk officers received no orientation or structured briefing, and while colleagues and managers were helpful in answering questions, no one really explained how information was to be collected. For several desk officers taking up new country assignments, there had been no systematic handover of primary sources and contacts, nor was there a handover briefing.

56. Some initiatives have been taken to fill the information and analysis gap. Within the United Nations system, the Framework Team is the primary source of system-wide information in support of early warning and conflict prevention. However, OIOS noted that the regional divisions have not established networks of area-based expertise within the United Nations system. There is a need for a communications strategy to be introduced to ensure clarity within the Department

²⁸ Call, *op. cit.*

²⁹ For example: the Framework Team, "Applying preventive measures"; the United Nations Development Group/Executive Committee on Humanitarian Affairs, "Framework for analysis"; and the UNDP-Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery, "Conflict-related development analysis".

and among its partners about the strategic and operational objectives of sharing information.

57. The Department of Political Affairs makes use of academic and non-governmental organizations for information-gathering and analytical tasks. Strong partnerships have been forged with, for example, the International Crisis Group, the Conflict Prevention and Peace Forum, the Center for International Cooperation and the International Peace Academy. This strategy is sound, but the regional divisions must exercise due diligence to verify the objectivity and sources of support for the external information and analysis providers. The divisions also must retain sufficient analytical capability to ensure that issues continue to be viewed from a multilateral perspective.

2. The creation of a policy planning unit has provided important policy support but its size limits its ability to support the regional divisions.

58. The Policy Planning Unit was created to provide cross-cutting, thematic policy support to the Department of Political Affairs and the regional divisions. Although it has supported important policy reviews and policy development, and has established strong working relationships with external partners, its very low staffing level has seriously limited its ability to fulfil its mandate to provide policy coordination and capacity development support to the regional divisions. OIOS noted that the work of PPU is highly oriented towards meeting demands from the Office of the Under-Secretary-General for policy and ad hoc support, and these distract from its ability to support the regional divisions.

3. The work process for preparation of information and analytical products is inefficient and dims the performance incentives of even the most talented desk officers.

59. The Department of Political Affairs analytical and information products go through six to nine layers of review between the desk officer and the Secretary-General. Considering the layers of clearance involved, the previously-noted finding that those products are sometimes of poor quality is disturbing.³⁰ The many layers are also likely to contribute to delivery delays.³¹

60. OIOS acknowledges that it is important for different perspectives and sources of information, with differing levels of confidentiality, to be incorporated into a high-quality, accurate and strategically sound final product, and appreciates that there may be added value from each review layer. However, the current production chain is not just time-consuming. Lacking transparency, it does not facilitate the consideration of different viewpoints, stifles strategic thinking and creativity at the lower levels, does not provide feedback to the different parts of the production chain, and does not engender accountability and recognition for each individual's

³⁰ It is not uncommon for F-5s, D-1s and D-2s to be copy-editing written outputs, at the expense of substantive analytical and division management tasks. Without examining the sequence of drafts of a product, it is not possible to say where quality issues arise, except to note that the upper layers are, at best, not catching and correcting as much as they should and could be detracting more than they add.

³¹ This was noted in an internal memorandum from the Chef de Cabinet to the Department of Political Affairs, dated 5 January 2005. On the basis of recent interviews, timeliness has improved with better organization of the process but it remains an issue.

contribution to the product. Thus it provides little incentive or empowerment for those involved to do their best work.

61. Furthermore, OIOS notes that there is often little difference in job responsibility between desk officers of different grade levels. P-3s and P-5s may have very similar assignments and responsibilities, which may serve as a disincentive to senior staff.

4. Knowledge-sharing is not systematic.

62. OIOS found that staff of the Department of Political Affairs rarely identified and shared their knowledge of good practices or lessons learned, documented ideas, or information and experience that might be useful to others. While there is some knowledge-sharing between divisions, it is largely ad hoc in nature. OIOS observed an absence of any knowledge management activities in the regional divisions.

63. An initiative that OIOS found commendable is the Peacemaker project: a web-based facility to provide support to Special Representatives of the Secretary-General, Special Envoys and other staff involved in peacemaking work by sharing experiences, guidelines and lessons learned. However, it has a very limited development budget, has not been officially launched and its utility is yet to be seen.

5. Gender balance has improved but gender issues are not fully mainstreamed.

64. The percentage of female staff members in the Professional and higher categories with appointments of at least one year has increased from 34.5 per cent in June 2000 to 48.8 per cent in September 2005. However, gender mainstreaming in the Department of Political Affairs has not been pursued systematically. Although the Department was the first entity within the United Nations system to hold gender-mainstreaming workshops starting in 1997, experience and expertise on this issue have not been effectively transferred across the divisions.³² There is, for example, no systematic collection and analysis of gender-specific information.³³ OIOS also noted indications of frustration among women Professional staff that they are generally not given high-profile assignments, and that the Department's gender focal point is a General Service staff member who divides time between gender-related activities and a regular job.

6. The results-based management approach is not used properly in the regional divisions and the performance appraisal system is not functioning adequately.

65. For the biennium 2004-2005, the regional divisions had a target of addressing or settling through peaceful means, 60 potential, new or ongoing conflicts, and a target for there to be Department of Political Affairs post-conflict peacebuilding activities in 30 countries. At the end of the biennium, noting the difficulty of

³² Finding in "Implementing Security Council resolution 1325 (2000): DPA's role and responsibility workshop report" (December 2005).

³³ For example, information on the special needs of women and girls during repatriation and resettlement and for rehabilitation, reintegration and post-conflict reconstruction.

providing precise numbers of conflict situations addressed, the Department maintained those figures as its best-guess estimates of results attained.³⁴

66. OIOS is not in a position to comment on the validity of the best-guess estimates of the Department of Political Affairs. However, OIOS noted that the lack of measurability of the indicators does not support performance assessment and results-based management. More measurable output and intermediate-level outcome indicators can and should be identified.

67. Furthermore, in comparing the external assessments of the divisions' quality of work with the internal performance assessments of staff, OIOS noted a disconnect between results attained and the evaluation of performance. The regional divisions urgently need to establish, in consultation with the Executive Office of the Secretary-General and other clients, more meaningful performance measures. OIOS observed that the e-PAS is not functioning adequately, either as a means of providing feedback or in performance assessment.

7. Staff morale is low in three of four divisions but is improving.

68. Except in one division, the majority of staff stressed a low level of morale. The presence of functioning subregional teams that meet regularly and backstop each other effectively, and an open, consultative, staff-oriented division management have contributed to good morale in one division. The sources of low morale emanate from both departmental and division levels; they include perceived lack of appreciation for staff and non-transparent management practices. Staff perceive that the new management of the Department of Political Affairs holds promise for restoration of trust between staff and management. However, there is concern that there will be little similar restoration of trust in one division where the problem is particularly acute.

8. Change management efforts have been made, but there is no management for change.

69. To their credit, the Department of Political Affairs and regional divisions' management have been aware of the weaknesses discussed in paragraphs 60 to 68 above for some time, and have made efforts to identify, if not address, them. Three internal assessments have been conducted since 1999 as well as several self-critical studies in attempts to improve the effectiveness of their work.

70. Unfortunately, many of the worthwhile recommendations were either neglected or the change process foundered, lacking the required champions at the appropriate management levels. Few of the recommendations made by the Department of Political Affairs Change Management Teams in 2004 have been implemented as neither beleaguered management nor staff have been able to follow through on internal operational improvements, training or competency development initiatives.

³⁴ As explained by the Department of Political Affairs in its report submitted via the Integrated Monitoring and Documentation Information System (IMDIS), "in purely numerical terms, whether there are more or less conflicts vis-a-vis targets and estimates is not a reflection of the success or failure of the work of the regional divisions, but may be a useful indication of their workload. That is, it would be fatuous to conclude that the number of conflicts in the world was directly related to the work of the divisions."

V. Conclusions

71. OIOS appreciates the ability of the management and staff of the regional divisions to keep up with the increasing workload of recent years given limited resources, and acknowledges that many ongoing management challenges are due to the almost constant need to respond to the exigencies of crises, and the steady flow of demands for substantive support from the Executive Office of the Secretary-General and others.

72. However, their evolving mandates imply a set of expectations and requirements that the divisions may not be in a position to meet. Change initiatives attempted in the past failed because they lacked adequate leadership and resources. Unless provisions are made to support the required changes, including efforts to clarify mandates and establish organization-wide working processes with clear division of labour, neither the regional divisions nor the system at large will be in a good position to effectively meet future challenges.

73. OIOS makes 10 recommendations for enhancing the work of the regional divisions.

VI. Recommendations

Recommendation 1

74. The Department of Political Affairs and the regional divisions should, as a matter of priority, take the initiative in working with relevant United Nations partners to develop and propose a system-wide strategy to better address intra-State and transnational conflicts (see paras. 7-13 above). *The Department of Political Affairs commented that development of such a strategy would involve the United Nations system as a whole and, as such, it should be taken together with recommendation 3 below.*

Recommendation 2

75. In consultation with the Executive Office of the Secretary-General and relevant United Nations system forums and partners, the Department of Political Affairs should seek clarification of its role and vision as the focal point for conflict prevention, peacemaking and post-conflict peacebuilding, and how the regional divisions are to support that role (see paras. 14-18 above). *The Department of Political Affairs acknowledged that clarification of its focal point role was necessary, but stated that that would be a time-consuming and sensitive process.*

Recommendation 3

76. The regional divisions should strengthen institutional mechanisms for inter-agency communications and for the design, promotion, mobilization and monitoring of system-wide support in conflict prevention and peacebuilding. These mechanisms should include: (a) an established protocol for inter-agency communications and information exchange on conflict-related reports and matters; (b) a well-defined concept for collaboration with the partner institutions and a needs assessment of each partnership (including regional commissions); and (c) where appropriate, guidelines for collaboration to clarify respective interests, roles and obligations of

the collaborating institutions. With regard to the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, in order to strengthen complementarities and avoid duplications, a working group should be established to explore alternatives for formal institutional arrangements that would meet the needs of both departments (see paras. 19-30 above). *The Department of Political Affairs commented that although it readily acknowledged the need to address the division of labour with the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, it felt strongly that that could not be achieved through the format of a working group as proposed in the present report.*

Recommendation 4

77. The regional divisions should seek to implement fully all the agreed-upon modalities for cooperation with the regional organizations (see paras. 31-34 above).

Recommendation 5

78. The regional divisions should undergo an intensive, time-bound and results-oriented change management process. This should include reviews of management, organization structure, human resources and work processes and, if necessary, reprofiling of the competency needs of the divisions to better meet their mandates. The review of organization structure should consider the restructuring of the two mega-divisions — the Asia and the Pacific Division and the Americas and Europe Division — to better support substantive and management prerogatives. The work of the Policy Planning Unit should be reviewed with the goal of more closely linking it to the priorities and needs of the regional divisions. All the reviews should consider gender issues as well. The process should be driven by mandate, be facilitated by external experts in change management, have a dedicated internal change management capacity, and be required to propose restructured, renewed and adequately resourced regional divisions (see paras. 36-46, 49-53, 58 and 68-70 above).

Recommendation 6

79. An independent, external evaluation should be conducted of both the Trust Fund for Preventive Action and the Trust Fund for Special Political Missions and Other Activities, to assess their effectiveness, efficiency, relevance and impact, as well as their management and operations (see paras. 47 and 48 above).

Recommendation 7

80. A protocol for information collection and a framework for conflict analysis should be established, in consultation with end-users and experts in the field, as well as with regional organizations to ensure relevance to local and regional concerns. The resulting protocol and framework for analysis should be made part of an orientation toolkit for desk officers, made available on the Intranet, and they should also be periodically reviewed and improved (see paras. 54-57 above).

Recommendation 8

81. The regional divisions should develop a knowledge management strategy for developing, organizing, storing, sharing and using their knowledge assets. In addition, the Department of Political Affairs should establish an evaluation policy to

support institutional knowledge and best practices development (see paras. 62 and 63 above).

Recommendation 9

82. The regional divisions should establish division-level gender-mainstreaming goals and action plans; these should be in support of the department-level gender-mainstreaming action plan and have direct links to management and individual performance plans (e-PAS). The regional divisions should also designate gender focal points for each division, to support the work of the Department's gender focal point (see para. 64 above).

Recommendation 10

83. The regional divisions should strengthen their results-based management system. A clear relationship should be established between the e-PAS, the division management plans and the subprogramme logical framework. In consultation with their primary "clients", the divisions should further refine and develop performance indicators that are meaningful for internal management purposes (see paras. 65-67 above).

(Signed) Inga-Britt Ahlenius
Under-Secretary-General for Internal Oversight Services

4 April 2006